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INSIDE



Expanded Partnership

Pacific Insurance Underwriters Inc. is expanding its partnership with Century Insurance Co. Ltd., becoming only the second insurance company in the Micronesia region to serve as CIC's general agent.

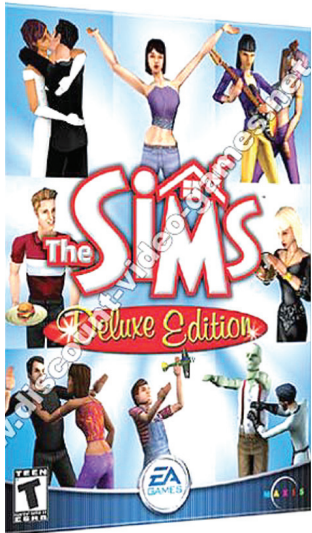
Page 5



Car Bomb

A suicide car bomb tore through a downtown street Wednesday, killing 68 Iraqis and turning a bustling area of shops and fruit stalls into charred corpses, twisted metal and burning cars.

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Girl Video Gamers

Women make up 39 percent of all video and computer gamers, and industry analysts say most are computer gamers "on the run."

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Babauta sets higher minimum wage for govt contracts

By JOHN RAVELO
REPORTER

Noting the high unemployment rate among the local populace, Gov. Juan N. Babauta yesterday issued a directive that would increase the minimum wage for all government and Capital Improvement Project contracts to \$6.75 per hour effective Jan. 2005, besides

maintaining \$5.75 per hour rate that has been in effect since late April.

Babauta directed the Labor Department and the Workforce Investment Agency to identify unemployed resident workers who are available to work, and make them aware of the opportunities created by the governor's directive. The governor instructed these agencies to train resident workers to meet job quali-

fications for government projects.

Babauta's issued the directive days after the adoption of a new labor policy allowing nonresident workers to engage in multiple jobs.

The directive effectively expanded the coverage of May 2003's Executive Order No. 228, which instructed the government's contracting officers to ensure that companies with CIP projects

worth over \$2,000 will pay their workers the U.S. minimum wage.

The directive specifically pegged the minimum wage for employees engaged by contractors for upcoming government and CIP contracts at \$5.75 per hour, maintaining the governor's directive during his State of the Commonwealth Address last April 29.

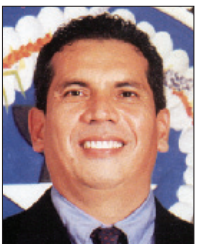
See BABAUTA on Page 12

Salas blasts new labor regs

By AGNES E. DONATO
REPORTER

The second highest official of the Department of Labor yesterday expressed dissatisfaction with the newly adopted rules and regulations for nonresident workers, saying they are "misfocused" and benefit only guest workers.

A member of the task force that formulated the regulations, Labor deputy secretary Andrew Salas said he stopped attending the group's meetings because he didn't believe in the philosophy of the task force and in many of the provisions in the labor regulations.



Salas

"The task force is misinformed; it is misfocused. I think it was a waste of my time," Salas said in an interview.

He explained that instead of addressing the high unemployment rate among resident workers, the new labor regulations focus solely on ensuring that guest workers get jobs one after another.

Among the major changes imple-

See SALAS on Page 12



BRAD E. RUSZALA

WELCOME HOME CHAMPS

The CNMI Little League All-Star team celebrates their victory over Indonesia in the finals of the Asia/Pacific Regional Baseball Tournament with Gov. Juan M. Babauta yesterday at the Saipan International Airport. The team was also greeted upon their arrival by a crowd of cheering fans, parents, and family members.

MVA's funding shortage reaches \$1.9 million

By AGNES E. DONATO
REPORTER

The Department of Finance is now behind by \$1.9 million on its budget allotment for the Marianas Visitors Authority, causing a delay in MVA payments to its marketing offices.

MVA managing director Vicky Benavente reported that the tourism agency last got funding from the Finance Department on July 14. The \$370,000 that MVA received was its partial allotment for the third quarter of fiscal year 2004—which covers the months of April, May, and June.

The MVA has a total budget appro-



Benavente

priation of \$7 million for the current fiscal year.

So far, the agency has received only "a little over \$3 million," Benavente said. This amount does not include the \$858,000 that MVA passed on to the Department of Lands and Natural Resources for the care of tourism sites; the 1 percent of the budget paid to the Office of the Public Auditor; and the 2 percent budget reserve.

"The funding shortage is not something that we are complaining about. We

understand that the government is facing financial problems. But it is a major concern for us being the government's marketing arm, because we have to continually advertise and promote our destination," Benavente said.

She noted that due to the funding delay, MVA's vendors and off-shore marketing offices in Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, and China have to wait for more than 30 days to get paid.

She added that the agency is also implementing various cost-cutting measures, such as holding off the replacement of personnel who have resigned.

Various positions at the tourism office

See MVA on Page 12

2002 rebates out next week

By JOHN RAVELO
REPORTER

By Friday next week, nearly all rebate and refund checks for tax year 2002 would be released to taxpayers, Finance Secretary Fermin Atalig said yesterday.

The government is pinning its hopes on the payment of business gross revenue taxes early next week to fund the rebate payments.

Of some \$20 million worth of rebates for tax year 2002, only a total of

See 2002 on Page 12



Local

CNMI earns royalties from commemorative coins

By JOHN RAVELO
REPORTER

The CNMI government is earning royalties from the sale of commemorative coins bearing the name and seal of the Commonwealth.

Yesterday, the company

authorized to mint and sell the commemorative coins—SoftSky—handed Gov. Juan N. Babauta a \$25,000-check as royalty, in addition to the \$25,000 earlier given to the CNMI government.

“We had this agreement to do the minting,” Babauta said.

“What a way to earn money just by the use of the name CNMI!”

Babauta then handed over the check to Finance Secretary Fermin Atalig, as the royalty goes to the CNMI’s general fund.

In a media conference yesterday, SoftSky president Joseph Hartman said one of its clients,



JOHN RAVELO

Gov. Juan N. Babauta shows off a commemorative coin bearing the name and seal of the Commonwealth, which was minted by American firm SoftSky. The company yesterday presented a \$25,000 check to the government as royalty for the use of the CNMI's name and seal on the coin.

cars unlimited

lottery

diabetes
+green

gorman

National Collector’s Mint, Inc., already corrected its wrong advertisement that claimed that the coins could be used for legal tender. No lawsuit arose from the wrong advertisement.

Hartman said the CNMI government would receive royalty fee from time to time, as his company plans on expanding the market of the CNMI commemorative coins.

“It’s a free tool to promote your name,” Hartman said. Besides the U.S., Hartman said SoftSky would market the coins in Europe—particularly Germany, which has historical ties with the Northern Marianas—Japan, and China.

Hartman said his company has manufactured some 5,000 CNMI coins so far. He did not divulge the exact royalty percentage the CNMI gets from each coins sold, but hinted that it is “way more than 5 percent.”

SoftSky not only plans to manufacture 1933 Gold Double Eagle mint coins bearing the name and seal of the CNMI, but also other emblems.

Washington supports increase in local matching waiver but...

By JOHN RAVELO
REPORTER

Interior Deputy Assistant Secretary David Cohen has expressed the Bush administration’s support for increasing the waiver requirement on local matching funds for certain federal grants to the insular areas—including the CNMI—but added that the waiver should not be mandatory for discretionary grants coming from other federal agencies.

CNMI Washington Rep. Pete A. Tenorio earlier expressed concern that the passage of House Resolution 1189 might result in reduced funding in some federal programs for the CNMI. The federal bill is now at the Senate after being passed by the U.S. House of Representatives.

U.S. House Rep. Eni F.H. Faleomavaega of American Samoa introduced the bill, which was co-sponsored by Reps.

Madeleine Z. Bordallo of Guam and Donna Christensen of the Virgin Islands.

Cohen testified before the U.S. Senate’s Committee on Energy and Natural Resources in connection with the legislative measure, which seeks to increase the waiver requirement from \$200,000 to \$500,000 on local matching funds for grants to the CNMI, Guam, the Virgin Islands, and American Samoa.

The bill seeks to waive matching requirement on grants of \$500,000 or less, including in-kind contributions, from federal agencies, including the Interior, Education, Justice and Health and Human Services Departments. For grants requiring local matching funds of \$500,000 or more, the measure seeks to waive \$500,000 of the matching requirement.

Cohen said the mandatory waiver should only apply to “for-

mula” grants, which he said are “tailored for use by states with conditions and limitations imposed with the states in mind.” He said grants from the Interior’s Office of Insular Affairs aptly fall under the formula grant category.

“Territories are often included as an afterthought. Even the smallest and poorest state has many more resources at its disposal for dealing with grants than do the territories,” Cohen said. “The waiver, therefore, makes sense for formula grants.”

There are grants that should not entail mandatory local matching waiver, according to Cohen.

He said grant-giving agencies should be given the flexibility to decide on whether or not to waive matching fund requirements for discretionary grants.

“The matching requirement helps to ensure that the grant objective is a priority for the territory seeking the grant,” Cohen said.

Tenorio congratulates new NMC president

By CASSIE DLG FEJERAN
SPECIAL TO THE TRIBUNE

Shortly after receiving news on the appointment of Antonio V. Deleon Guerrero as the new president of the Northern Marianas College, Washington Representative Pedro A. Tenorio commended the long-time NMC officer.

‘I have learned of the great news about your unanimous appointment by the board of NMC to the position of president. I want you to know that I am pleased and equally excited, as I am sure many of our people, of the excellent choice the board made,’ Tenorio said in his letter to Deleon Guerrero.

Tenorio has offered Deleon Guerrero assistance to facilitate the college financial and other applicable needs that will be provided by federal agencies or the U.S. Congress.

“My office is fully committed to assist our public education system as well as our only institution of higher learning [NMC] to fulfill their difficult and challenging mission of providing quality education particularly to those that lack the opportunity to matriculate outside of our Commonwealth,” Tenorio said.

As president, Deleon Guerrero plans to strengthen the college by addressing the multiple needs and challenges facing

NMC through cooperation, collaboration, and teamwork.

He believes that the college will bring desired changes, and transform from a good community college to an outstanding institution of higher education with commitment from the employees at NMC.

CREES eyes food processing on Saipan

The Northern Marianas College Cooperative Research Extension and Education Service is actively pursuing the development of a food processing industry on Saipan by providing technical advice in the CNMI.

The goal for the service is to develop an industry that will enhance economic development through value adding, and development of export opportunities.

Edgar Cocker, product development and marketing specialist, is calling interested individuals to take the opportunity

to learn how to commercially process and prolong the shelf life of various local foods.

Technical advice will be shared on how to maintain the natural quality for fruit jams, fruit juices and wines, tuba, pickles, hot pepper paste, noni juices among others.

CREES will also assist with nutritional and microbiological analysis, bar coding, packaging and marking.

For information contact Edgar Cocker at 287-0561 or 234-5498 extension 1709. *(Cassie DLG Fejeran)*

camacho

cb cruz

uno shop

mcdo

COMMUNITY Briefs

Chuukese meeting set

This is to inform all citizens of Chuuk in the CNMI that there will be an important meeting tomorrow, July 31, at 11:30am. Chuuk Gov. Ansito Walter will be on island to meet with you. The meeting will be at the residence of Mrs. Rita K. Billy in Gualo Rai.

Mount Carmel parent orientation meeting

Mount Carmel School's mandatory Parent Orientation Meeting is scheduled this coming Wednesday, Aug. 4, to be held at the Mount Carmel School Gym.

The meeting is for parents of students that will be attending for School Year 2004-2005. Parents are given the option of either attending the 12:00 pm meeting or the 6pm meeting.

Contact Mt. Carmel School at telephone number 235-1285 for inquiries.

SNISWCD meeting

The Saipan and Northern Islands Soil and Water Conservation District would like to inform the general public of their meeting on Aug. 5, 2004 at 1:30pm, at the Natural Resources Conservation Service Office. For more information contact the office at 234-6170.

UPAA moves raffle draw date

The University of the Philippines Alumni Association CNMI Chapter has moved the June 12 fundraising raffle draw to Aug. 14, Saturday.

Those who have not yet purchased tickets are encouraged to do so. Proceeds will go to the UPAA's "Donate a Classroom Project" in the Philippines, and will help recognize and support deserving CNMI students.

The Aug. 14 raffle drawing will be held at the POLO office, 1st Floor of Nauru Building in Susupe, 6pm.

Torres offers free notarial services

Former congressman Stanley T. Torres, who is also a notary public, is offering free notarial services to all U.S. Army Reservists and their dependents.

Torres can be contacted through the offices of:

Rep. Heinz Hofschneider 664-6969

Rep. Jesus Attao 664-8822

Rep. David Apatang 664-8980

Or in an emergency 287-9255

Social Security visit to Rota postponed

The Social Security representative's visit to Rota, originally scheduled for July 16, has been postponed because the Pacific Islands Aviation flight from Saipan to Rota has been cancelled. The visit will be rescheduled when reliable air service from Saipan to Rota is again available.

For more information, Rota residents can call toll free at 532-9421. The local number on Saipan is 234-6203.

OFW health screening reset

The Overseas Workers Welfare Administration, Philippine Overseas Labor Office and the OFW Advisory Council is informing the Filipino community on Saipan that the Health Screening Program this July is rescheduled for August 1, 2004, 9am, at the Ground Floor of the Nauru Building.

Residential, biz inspections in Kagman II village

The Division of Environmental Quality and the Bureau of Environmental Health would like to inform the residents of Kagman II village that on-site disposal system and premise compliance inspections would be conducted on residential and business facilities. The inspections has been ongoing since April 21, 2004 and will continue to be conducted every Tuesday and Wednesday.

Kagman II residents are requested to cooperate with inspectors in keeping their dog(s) on a leash, for the safety of the inspectors. Both BEH and DEQ inspectors are required to wear their respective uniforms and photo identification during all inspections.

For additional information on the OSDS inspections, contact the BEH office at 664-4870/2 or the DEQ office at 664-8500/1.

Pag-IBIG refunds available

Pag-IBIG overseas program members from 1996-to January 1998 can now apply for a refund of their total contributions plus the 3-percent dollar interest tax-free.

"Just fill out a refund application form and you will receive your refund in U.S. dollars. After getting your refund, you can be a member again by submitting a new pop membership form and contribute a minimum of \$5.00 per month," according to a Pag-IBIG statement.

For a minimum contribution of \$5 a month, former members can also activate their Pag-IBIG membership also in the Philippines using the same Pag-IBIG ID number.

"Your contribution will be converted into Philippine pesos using the current conversion rate and it will earn a 7.5-percent peso interest. After 25 to 30 years from your initial contribution, you are entitled to a refund in Philippine peso of all your contribution including interest tax-free," the agency said.

For more information, call the Pop Saipan Office at 235-4749 or visit the Pop Office at the ground floor of the Nauru Building in Susupe and look for information officer Lynell F. Fulgencio.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JULY 1, 2004									
DEPARTURES					ARRIVALS				
Saipan-Majuro					Saipan-Majuro				
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6641	7:15am	7:30am	7:45am	8:00am	6641	7:15am	7:30am	7:45am	8:00am
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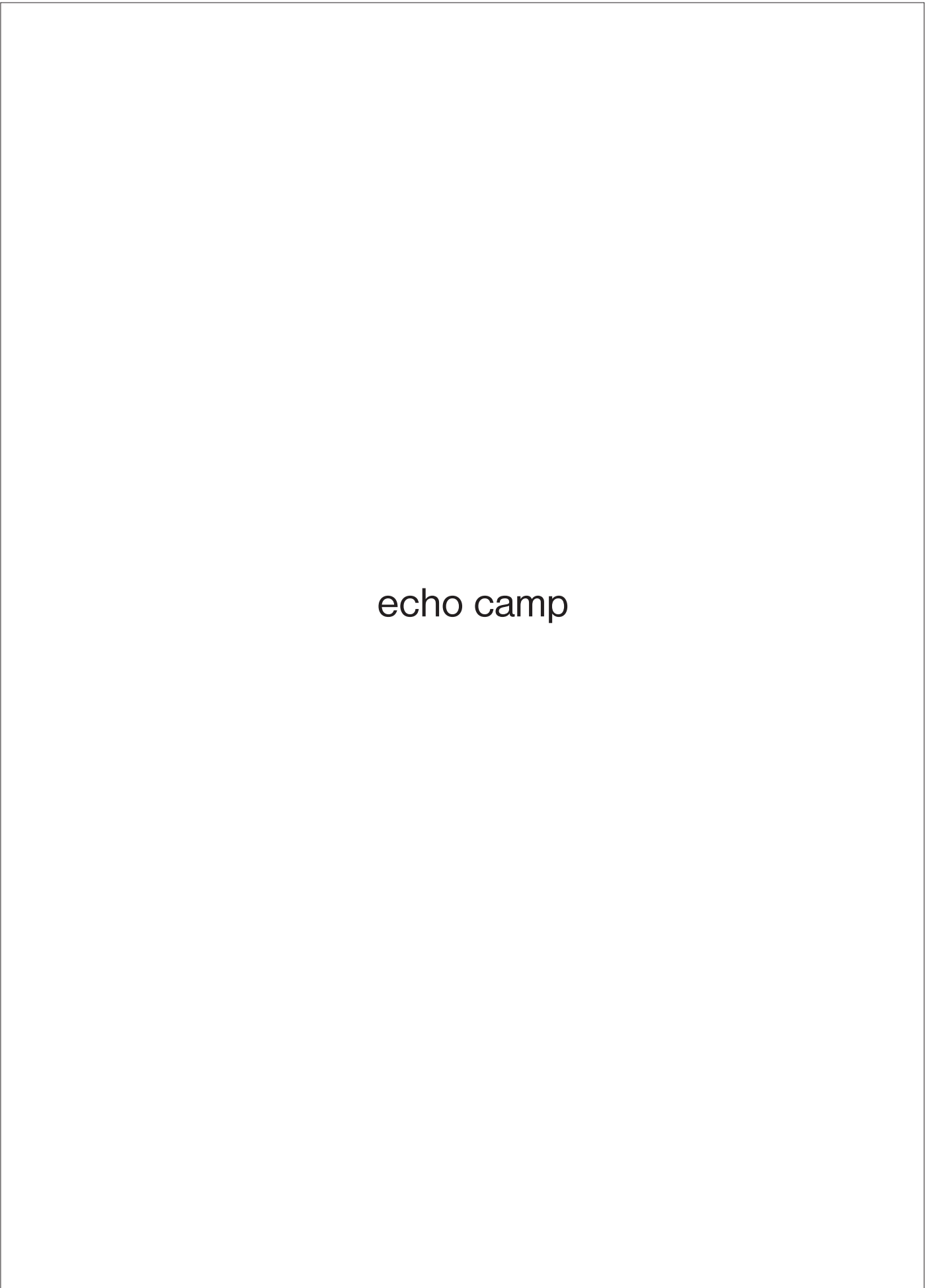
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EEOC cites rise in worker complaints

By AGNES E. DONATO
REPORTER

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission reported a significant increase in the number of discrimination complaints from the CNMI—from 102 cases for the entire fiscal year 2003 to 128 so far this year.

EEOC-Honolulu director Timothy A. Riera said complaints from CNMI workers now represent half of the overall number of cases filed with his office. Aside from the CNMI, the EEOC office in Honolulu covers Hawaii, Guam, and American Samoa.

“Certainly, it’s a concern, especially if you look at the population of the CNMI. We’ve seen a rise in charges from last year. It’s probably going to go higher than 128 since we’ve got another two months to go in the

fiscal year. And we see now that it represents 50 percent of all the cases filed with the Honolulu office,” Riera noted.

Out of the 128 cases filed in FY 2004, 95 percent alleged discrimination based on race, sex, age, religion, national origin and disability.

About 80 percent of the cases involved worker termination, while 9.4 percent more involved intimidation.

Last year, allegations of discrimination based on race, sex, age, religion, national origin, and disability represented 97 percent of the charges, Riera said.

More than half of workers who filed these cases claimed that they have been discriminated against because of their national origin, while 36 percent cited their sex as the reason.

About 45 of the bias complaints in FY 2003 involved

termination; 26 percent, terms and conditions of contract; 22 percent, employment benefits; and 15 percent, hiring.

Sexual harassment complaints constituted 16 percent of the cases.

Riera also expressed concern about cases of retaliation in the CNMI. He said 31 percent of the workers who filed EEOC charges said their employers took action against them for complaining about discrimination or filing an EEOC case.

“Definitely, there are companies in the CNMI which we never see any charges filed against—or which, when a charge is filed, take immediate action to correct it. But there are other employers that we are concerned about,” Riera said.

He urged these employers to do more training and to put up an equal employment opportunity program internally.

PREL conference benefits from US confab

By CASSIE DLG FEJERAN
SPECIAL TO THE TRIBUNE

The American School Counselors Association’s annual conference in Nevada brought valuable information to counselors attending the Pacific Region Educational Leadership conference in Rota.

“What we learned from the conference [last year] was echoed to the counselors [in the PREL conference] this year,” said Rebecca J. Flores, counselor for William S. Reyes Elementary.

“We were kept under the counseling [department] to present one session to other counselors [in the Micronesian region],” said Patricia Mendoza, counselor for Hopwood Junior High School.

The workshop gave coun-

selors the new vision of school counseling such as the leadership roles, assessment and use of data.

Mendoza said the workshop is a framework for counselors to guide them on the duties, roles, standards and benchmarks that must be followed.

“We can look in the system to help students. We are growing stronger with our guidance hat,” she added.

Flores and Mendoza are both members of the Public School System’s Counseling Steering Committee that represented the CNMI in the ASCA conference.

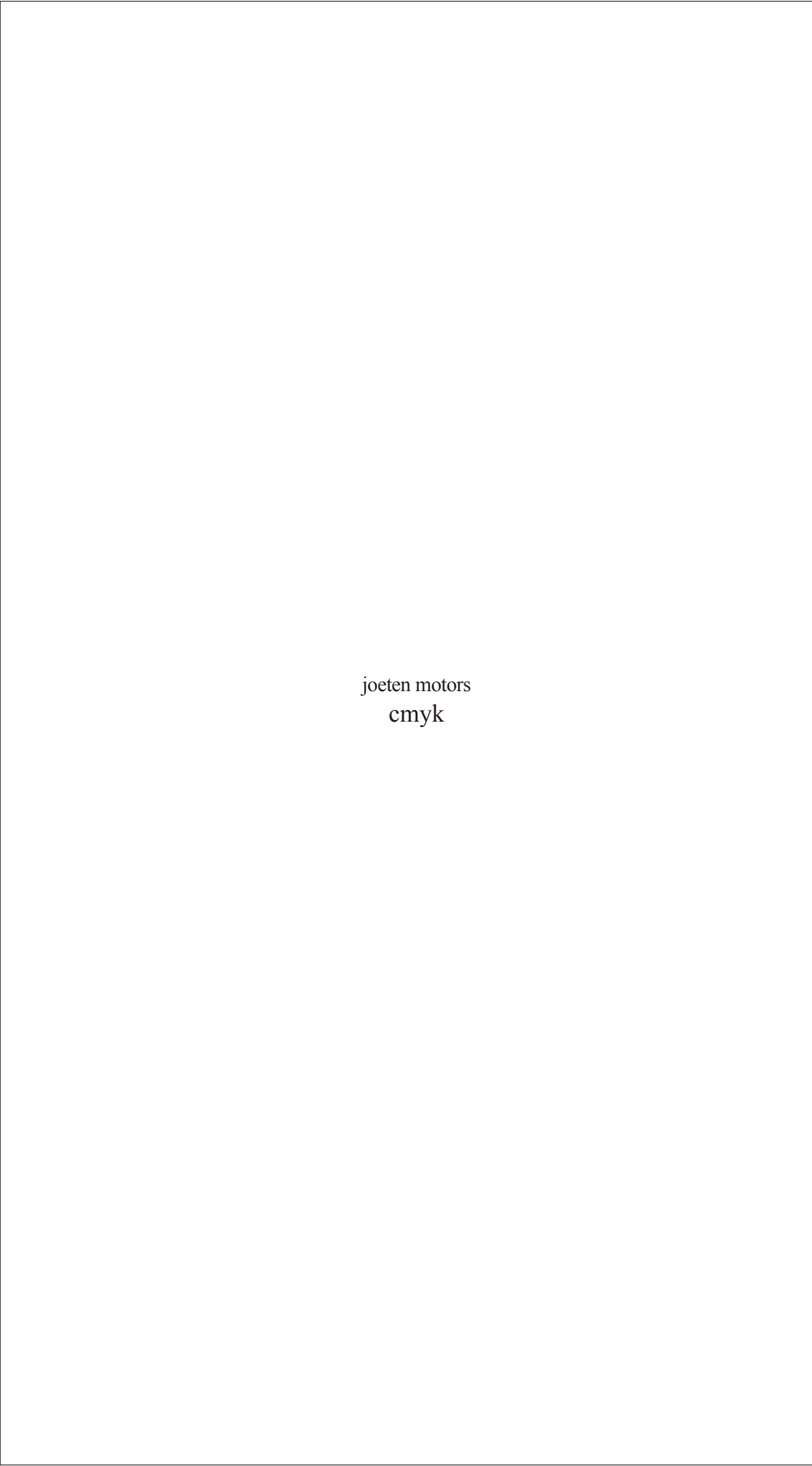
According to the ASCA website, the association focuses in providing professional development, enhancing school counseling programs and researching effective school counseling

practices to represent professional school counselors and promote professionalism and ethical practices.

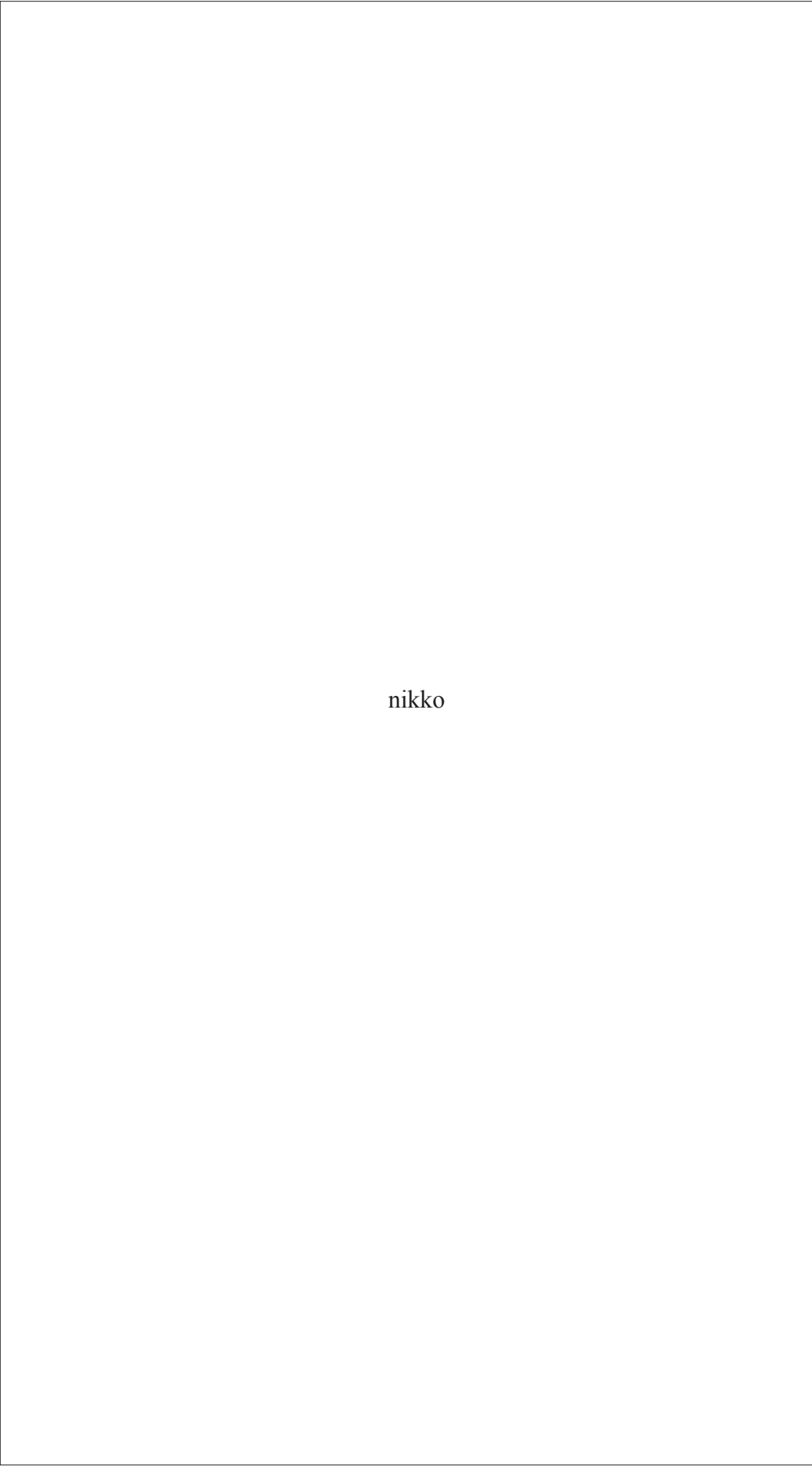
The ASCA conference last year gathered four CNMI delegates—Cecilia Labausa, counselor for Saipan Southern High School, Rota High School counselor Tanya King, Flores, and Mendoza in St. Louis.

Participants from Chuuk, Rota, Marshall Islands, Pohnpei, Yap, Kosrae, Tinian, and Guam attended the ASCA conference intended to focus on counselors working as leaders and advocates for systemic change.

The PREL conference next year will discuss new ideas, strategies, techniques, and activities that will improve the implementation of the comprehensive guidance and counseling program in the CNMI school level.



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Bill allowing unlimited hiring of alien workers on Rota passed

By JOHN RAVELO
REPORTER

Amid plans by a Korean investor to put up in the Commonwealth a factory manufacturing military products, the Senate yesterday passed a bill that seeks to authorize the governor to allow the unlimited hiring of nonresident workers on Rota.

Senate Bill 14-63 provides, however, that licensed businesses must invest at least \$1 million in either a major new development or the expansion of an existing development on Rota, so they could seek exemption from the moratorium on hiring nonresident workers.

Introduced by Sen. Diego Songao, the bill also seeks to allow the Department of Finance to issue and subsequently renew up to two business licenses to Rota companies manufacturing “backpacks, fanny packs and flexible liquid container packs without regard to the materials comprising the packs.”

Songao said Rota has been unable to provide investment and massive employment opportunities on the island, resulting in unemployment and underemployment of residents.

“If [Rota] is to enhance its tax base, Rota needs substantial business establishments, properly capitalized, to ensure that its residents have access to long-term employment and investment opportunities,” he said.

The bill’s passage comes after Korean firm Dong-In Entech Corp. Ltd. expressed interest to put up a factory manufacturing CamelBack, a leading name in outdoor gear products, including military

backpacks and hydration systems.

The company wants to bring in up to 300 nonresident workers and had asked Gov. Juan N. Babauta for an exemption from the nonresidents hiring moratorium.

Earlier, the governor’s legal counsel, Steven M. Newman, echoed Babauta’s supportive stance for the potential multi-million dollar investment, but said that the exemptions should be in compliance with existing laws.

Existing laws allow for exemption from the hiring moratorium for major new developments and critical services. The law requires an applicant for major new development exemption to include financial records in its request.

Among the conditions that need to be met to qualify for this exemption is that the employment of a nonresident worker will be on the premises of a new development or expansion of an existing development. If the undertaking is on Saipan, the employer must have invested at least \$5 million; if the development is on Tinian or Rota, the investment must be at least \$250,000.

To qualify for critical services exemption, the law states that “only those positions that are professional in nature to be filled by individuals with extensive training either in traditional educational institutions or technical training certification course plus applicable on-job experience in the field shall be considered.”

This exemption cannot be granted for unskilled or semi-skilled positions, and requires the employer to satisfy required documentation.

Babauta had expressed support for the investment plan, saying that the venture would possibly exceed the threshold investment amount for the company to qualify for a qualifying certificate.

The Investment Incentive Act of 2000 encourages economic development in the CNMI by offering tax breaks to businesses that engage in

or implement a desirable project or business activity.

Eligible businesses under the law may apply and receive a qualifying certificate executed by the governor, as recommended by Commonwealth Development Authority. The QC will allow an investor to benefit from certain tax rebates or abatements.

Babauta also assured Dong-In that it could enter into contracts with the U.S. Defense Department and that it could benefit from economic incentives provided by federal law, particularly from the so-called “Berry Amendment,” which provides economic incentives to production facilities that are based in the nation’s states, territories or possessions.



READY TO SERVE

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Company commander Capt. Franklin R. Babauta, right, and 1st Sgt. Joseph M. Santos, left, briefs Brig. Gen. Ma, commander of 9th Regional Readiness Command in Hawaii, on the status of soldiers who are set to deploy to Iraq. Babauta and Santos’ unit, Company E, 442nd Infantry, 100 Battalion, is comprised of soldiers from Guam, Saipan, Rota, and Tinian.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The parents of Marine Corps Lance Corporal Randy Takai Johnson, Alfred and Frances, center, receive a commemorative plaque in behalf of their son from the 3rd CNMI Association of Municipal Councils Inc., which recently adopted a resolution commending Johnson for his heroics while serving in Iraq.

Council lauds local marine

The 3rd CNMI Association of Municipal Councils Inc. recently adopted a resolution commending Marine Corps Lance Corporal Randy Takai Johnson for heroism in risking his own life to secure peace, freedom and democracy for the people of Iraq. The resolution prays for his speedy recovery from the injury he sustained in Iraq on April 22, 2004.

Johnson was assigned to be a combat engineer, 1371. He moved to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. After three months of training, he graduated and was assigned to

the 1st Marine Division, 1st Combat Engineer Battalion, Alpha Company 4th Platoon, 2nd Squad. After a two-month preparation, Johnson, together with his Alpha Company were deployed to Iraq to conduct Security and Stability Operation for seven months.

On April 22, 2004, while on routine patrol in Al-Ramadi, Iraq, Johnson detected an improvised bomb, halted the patrol, proceeded to confirm his finding, when the bomb was remotely detonated. Johnson was wounded from the explosion and was flown to Germany,

then to Balboa Naval Hospital in San Diego, California for treatment. Johnson has since returned to his unit.

“The members of the Association and the people of the CNMI are extremely proud of [Johnson] for heroism in risking his own life to secure peace, freedom and democracy for the people of Iraq,” part of the resolution reads.

The resolution was certified by association president Gregorio V. Deleon Guerrero and vice president Jude U. Hofschneider and was attested by secretary Mametto M. Ayuyu.

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Opinion

Saipan Tribune

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The Associated Press

Pacific Islands News Association

Letters to the Editor

Saipan Tribune welcomes contributions. All letters intended for publication must include the writer's name, address and, if possible, fax or telephone number. Letters are edited for space, clarity and fairness.

Same tired, old speeches

For nearly three decades now, we've heard tired speeches about (addressing) water shortages here. We're far off the mark from resolution because we're stuck in the mud of address.

The speeches are as empty as the water pipes emplaced in Garapan, San Jose, Susupe, As Lito, As Perdido, San Vicente and Chalan Kanoa Villages.

Then came a new form of government solution: establishment of a water task force to address water problems island-wide. CUC pitched in by planning to retain a consultant to study more water problems we already know. It's a case of the right hand not knowing what the left hand is doing.

The basic premise is: islands throughout the Pacific have small water lenses or aquifers. Island communities suffer from the lack of water in prolonged drought season. It means far less water in aquifers to meet the growing demands of the community. But we've also employed Chamorro Logic by drilling more water wells around the same source only to pump brackish water during the dry season.

The obvious dilemma is the continuing expansion of this community. It needs more water to feed new residential developments, islandwide. The seeming answer is to proceed with desalination of salt water. Otherwise, we may have to revert to building more outside toilets to mitigate the lack of water.

Gentlemen, please spare us the same tired old intramural speeches that are as empty as the pipes in the villages, speeches that have been regurgitated for nearly 30 years.

John S. DelRosario Jr.
Koblerville

A response to Senator Reyes

Let me respond to Sen. Pete P. Reyes in the same venue in which he made his remarks (in the June 8 issue of this paper). Senator Reyes was unhappy that I did not consult with him prior to my voicing an opinion in my column, On My Mind (found on the web and in this paper's Sunday edition), about his reaction to the governor's veto of three of Senator Reyes' bills. The senator claimed that the vetoes were a personal reaction by the governor, and I disagreed.

Senator, I do not own a TV set. I get my information mainly from reading the two local papers. I often do call parties for information related to subjects I write about, and often obtain copies of, and read, related documents as well.

I did not do so in this case because, to the best of my recollection, in all the coverage given your unhappiness with the governor's vetoes, not once was any substantive argument included about the issues regarding Senate Bill 14-11, Senate Draft 1, which concerned DNA testing in paternity suits. There was no clue that the governor's reasoning was in error, and that your objections did, indeed, have factual grounds.

I know you are articulate, and do not hesitate to voice your opinion. Since I found no explanation of your position in the papers I made the assumption that, therefore, there were no real grounds for the position you were taking on this bill.

The other two bills that were vetoed—one, proposing to abolish celebration of President's Day so as to observe Martin Luther King day, and the other proposing to restrict Marianas Visitors Authority's hiring of nonresident workers—are both more a matter of opinion than a matter of fact, and there did not seem a need for further clarification.

I realize that there is a risk in depending on what the newspapers report and what they don't, on what approach they take. But I simply don't have the resources to verify every piece of newspaper-provided data that I use.

On the bright side, at least now, with your detailed explanation of why SB 14-11 should not have been vetoed, we may all understand what the real issue is. Indeed, perhaps it will encourage legislators to override the veto of this bill. It's a pity the explanation wasn't provided sooner.

Senator, I meant no disrespect. Our relationship has been a respectful one, and I hope it continues that way.

Ruth L. Tighe
Tanapag, Saipan

Why Reagan is a legend

If the Commonwealth had to pick a hero, Ronald Reagan would be a good choice. After all, it was President Reagan who conferred U.S. citizenship on the island folks, an act that has been followed by a gravy train of sweet moolah that puts the financial sucrose in the term Uncle Sugar.

Of course, if you go anywhere near the English-language media, they have soured the sweetness of Reagan's dignified stature by grinding in into mush with the millstones of Posthumous Saturation Coverage. Among all the romp in the pomp, though, I've gotten a lot of email questions from foreign readers, many of them workers or managers on Saipan, who are trying to gauge the American psyche on this matter. Namely, this: "What's the deal with Ronald Reagan? Why was he so popular?"

Well, that's a fair question. Let me see if I can cook up a fair answer.

You can't separate a man from his times, and Reagan secured the presidency in really bleak times for the United States. Not bleak as in crisis of Great Depression or WWII proportions, but bleak as in a vague and all encompassing despair, like a wet blanket had settled over the nation and was slowly smothering everyone's hopes. President Jimmy Carter just wasn't hitting the right buttons there in the Oval Office.

Inflation was roaring out of control, and I remember well those double-digit interest rates and the obscene, wealth-depleting costs of my parents' mortgage and car payments as they sweat the bills each month.

A gas crisis hit, and was countered with total incompetence.

And on the geopolitical stage, a handful of rag-tag Iranian yahoos holding U.S. hostages managed to geld Uncle Sam, while Carter looked like a deer frozen in headlights.

No disrespect intended to Mr. Carter, since he is a man of great intelligence and character. He just had lousy luck in Washington. And he had no knack for economics.

Still, lousy luck is, well, lousy, and economics is mighty unforgiving of messing up, and any way you looked at it back then, U.S.

Examining the local mom-and-pop phenomenon

Q •Hafa Adai! I look forward to reading your column everyday and one thing for sure, you are truly impartial and that I surely appreciate. I have a few concerns that I would like to share with you and hopefully will be able to see you address one or two in your column.

A good number of mom-and-pop stores are operating businesses in small spaces with very limited merchandise and obviously run and managed daily by family members or attendants who could barely communicate in English. It just makes me wonder; how and in what ways do such businesses contribute to the CNMI economy. Are they simply operating such businesses as a front just so they can continue residing in the CNMI? I am sure that their income verse their living expenses is a big negative. Or are they reporting their business gross income?

Certainly, I am pleased to hear of your great interest—like many others—in my Q & A column. My purpose for this column is to enhance public awareness on issues of common interest in the community. It's my goal is to build a strong enough pressure from a well-informed public to compel the policymakers to develop and follow a socio-economic development plan that charts a successful development path for the people of the CNMI.

Let me begin my answer to your question by highlighting the socio-economic significance of small businesses, the so-called "mom-and-pop enterprises." This type of small business is primarily operated by the owner and his/her family members. Small businesses employ almost 60 percent of America's workers, contribute 50 percent of sales and account for half of private sector output. According to published government data, small and family owned businesses represented 98 percent of all U.S. employers, generated the third-largest economy in the world and contributed 50 percent of the gross domestic product in year 2000. According to the U.S. Small Business Administration's Office of Advocacy, small firms made up nearly 90 percent of all exporters and produced one-fifth of the known export value in 2001. For that matter no national political leader can afford to ignore policies aimed at addressing the issues concerning mom-and-pop enterprises. Thus, invariably every federal administration has declared policies to improve the economic security of small businesses, provide them help to meet challenges by improving access to capital, ease the tax burden, expand the opportunity of access to new markets, make technology and information work for small businesses and help them in implementing policies that value families. However, development of specific policies addressing issues of small businesses by our lo-

By **ED STEPHENS**

Ed Stephens, Jr. is an economist and columnist for the Saipan Tribune. "Ed4Saipan@yahoo.com"



policy—economic, military, whatever—was an utter disaster. Want to understand Reagan's popularity? You have to understand this first. It's a context thing.

And then Ronald Reagan appeared and he turned things around. The smothering blanket was lifted. The sun came out. Things got better. That's what happened. The details don't matter.

Meanwhile, consider that TV is the center of life in the USA, where the average American now watches 5.3 hours per day (yes, per DAY) of television. Reagan wasn't the first TV president, but he was the best. He was telegenic. He was poised. He had an obvious sense of humor. He was dignified, but not stuffy, not cocky, not glib, not pompous. He seemed bigger than the title of President, not the other way around.

He seemed bigger than life, really, which is why so many people were so shaken a few days ago when they found that he wasn't.

Personally, there were some Reagan policies that I did not mesh with. Not everyone in his administration was on my warm-and-fuzzy list. But, so what? He was still a great among greats. In fact, in contemplating the man's legacy, perhaps the best reflection on him is who his shrill and vocal enemies are. If screeching neurotics, child molesters, and welfare queens go apoplectic at the mention of his name...well....that puts points in Reagan's favor right there.

Ronald Reagan is an American legend, who was legendarily good to the people of the Commonwealth, too.

By **MOHAMMAD ASHRAF, PH.D.**

Ashraf is an International Resource Economist. He is solely responsible for the views expressed in this column and doesn't represent the views of Saipan Tribune. His email address is ashmdr@hotmail.com



cal government may yet be in its infancy.

Further, I will mention some specific steps taken under the Clinton administration where the Small Business Administration doubled its loan volume to small businesses in three years. With no drop in loans to other business owners, the number of guaranteed loans to women-owned businesses was quadrupled. The 1993 Economic Plan made 90 percent of small businesses eligible for tax relief, helping them to keep money needed for growth. Also, targeted tax preference for capital gains, reduced record keeping requirements, raised the small business expense limit for equipment by 75 percent and extended the Research and Experimentation Tax Credit, reduced the burden of regulatory enforcement, overhauled export controls, and made it easier for small firms to do business with the federal government during the same time.

Similar policies such as tax write-offs for small businesses recently enacted by the Minimum Wage Increase Act, regulatory relief and reduction in paperwork requirements, easier access to needed capital, provision of health care insurance and retirement savings plans for employers and employees are continuing under the current administration of President Bush.

Why are mom-and-pop or family businesses more appreciated by the community, compared with the bigger chain store businesses? The reasons include the effectiveness of family teams, positive customer perceptions of family ownership, willingness of family members to sacrifice for their enterprise, trust among family members, commitment to integrity and reputation, family support and more. Family businesses enable people to work hard for something more important than either opportunity or ego and that's family reputation.

Among the economic benefits of these businesses, studies show that the externally owned firms tend to purchase products from distant suppliers and channel profits to distant owners in other regions, thus generating smaller local multiplier effects than homegrown businesses. The addition of one new small firm results in an overall

See **EXAMINING** on Page 8



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

GETTING CONNECTED

Participants and coordinators of the 2004 Eco Camp come together for a snapshot in front of the Verizon banner after the end of one of their sessions at the Marianas Resort and Spa.

Another alleged shoplifter nabbed

BY SHAN SEMAN
REPORTER

Another shoplifting incident was reported Wednesday night at the Joeten Hafa Adai Shopping Center in Garapan, according to the Department of Public Safety.

DPS acting public information officer Captain Pete C. Muna disclosed in a statement yesterday that the male suspect, 22-year-old Allyson E. Cruz, was arrested shortly after 11pm after he reportedly stole a silver bracelet worth \$4.

According to Muna, a security guard at the establishment said that

about 9:54pm, Cruz was at the Saipan Souvenir section of the store when he allegedly took the item from a rack and looked at it. The suspect then reportedly removed the price tag from the item and placed the bracelet on his left wrist.

Police report indicated that the suspect was trying to lock the bracelet on his wrist when a friend approached and locked it for him.

Further, the report showed that the suspect proceeded to the cosmetics and sunglasses section.

"At this time, he placed the bracelet price tag into his left front pocket of his pants," Muna said. "At about 10:20pm,

the suspect went to the cashier and paid for two drinks and a bag of chips, and then walked out of the store."

Muna said the security guard stopped the suspect outside and verified his receipt to the items he purchased, but the bracelet was reportedly not included in the receipt.

The incident was immediately reported to the police, resulting on the suspect being placed under arrest and taken into custody at about 11:01pm.

It was the third shoplifting incident at the establishment in less than two weeks. On July 18, two individuals were nabbed for separate shoplifting incidents as well.

AG files complaint against man for \$3K theft

The Office of the Attorney General yesterday filed formal charges before the Superior Court against a 38-year-old man, who allegedly received money without performing functions that entitles him to receive wages.

Summoned to appear before the Superior Court is Raymond Pangelinan, who is being charged with five counts

each of illegal use of public supplies, services, time, and personnel, theft, and theft by deception.

Pangelinan allegedly unlawfully received money totaling \$3,637.10 through five separate pay periods between Nov. 21, 2002 and Feb. 8, 2003.

Documents submitted by chief prosecutor David Hutton indicated that Pangelinan

received \$292.09 for the pay period between Nov. 21 and 28, 2002; \$207.30 between Dec. 1 and 14, 2002; \$301.52 between Dec. 15 and 28, 2002; \$621.89 between Dec. 29, 2002 and Jan. 11, 2003; and \$1,196.70 between Jan. 12 and 25, 2003.

Pangelinan is expected appear before the Superior Court at 9am on Aug. 9. (Shan Seman)

2002

From Page 1

\$4.3 million remains to be disbursed. Some taxpayers reportedly received their rebate checks this week.

If the BGRT payments are received early next week, Atalig said nearly all un-

paid rebates would be satisfied by Friday, except for those whose income tax returns have discrepancies with withholding taxes submitted by the employers.

Only less than \$1 million worth of rebate checks belong to those whose tax return submissions had these discrepancies, Atalig said.

The government initially failed in its target to release 2002 rebates by the end of June; and 2003 rebates, sometime this month.

Atalig said the CNMI Treasury could start releasing 2003 rebates by the end of August, after 2002 rebates would have been released.

SALAS

From Page 1

mented under the new regulations is the provision allowing nonresident workers to hold multiple jobs in the Commonwealth, upon the consent of their primary employer.

"The initial intent [of the law allowing the hiring of guest workers] was to help local businesses realize economic prosperity... so that health, education and living standards in the Commonwealth would improve. But Labor has shifted from that original intent. Now, the very intent is to give guest workers all rights and privileges of finding another job," Salas said.

He added, "I understand importance of bringing in guest workers. I want to bring them in quicker than we are bringing them in right now. But I am also cognizant of the fact that I owe a lot of these jobs to my people. I'm not going to sit around in a task force [to discuss how to] give guest workers another job, while the 600 high school

kids that are graduating in the Commonwealth cannot even find one job."

Salas also reiterated his position on the abolition of employment transfer processes and the implementation of a policy requiring a guest worker to exit the Commonwealth after each contract termination or expiration, regardless if the employer plans to renew the contract of the worker or not.

Labor Department data, based on valid permits and pending applications as of March 2, 2004, showed that 2,655 of the 31,613 guest workers on island are hired on permit expiration transfer.

A total of 793 are employed on consensual transfer while 831 have been allowed to transfer by virtue of administrative orders.

Salas said that consensual transfers, in particular, are being abused by workers in their pursuit of better paying jobs.

The alien workers' rights to transfers and temporary work have also resulted in scores of frivolous complaints being filed with the Labor Department, he said.

BABAUTA

From Page 1

It also mandated a minimum wage of \$6.75 per hour effective Jan. 2005 for these contracts—higher by 50 cents than the \$6.25 per hour rate entailed by his SOCA directive.

"Despite the economic development that has already occurred, unemployment among local people remains high, particularly among entry-level workers. For instance, the 2000 census revealed that of the 958 persons 16-19 years of age and not in school, 39 percent were unemployed," Babauta said.

"This is the population of persons who might be expected to be starting their working life at minimum wage jobs. For these young people, however, there is a strong disincentive to look for work and accept employment, namely, the current minimum wage of \$3.05 per hour—not a living wage," he added.

Babauta said employers' ability to meet their labor demand due to the high availability of foreign workers exacerbates the disincentive to the local workforce.

He said the minimum wage not only

contributed to unemployment among local workers, but also pressured the government to hire a large workforce. He said the CNMI employs a larger workforce than the typical U.S. state, saying that the CNMI government employees-population ratio is 662 to 10,000. In typical U.S. states, the government worker-population ratio is 536 to 10,000.

Nonresident workers employed by contractors of government projects, though, would also enjoy the benefits from the minimum wage directive. Babauta issued yesterday's directive to all government agencies, including autonomous ones.

The governor required that all advertisements for government contracts indicate that employees of contractors and subcontractors would get hourly wages not less than the U.S. minimum level.

"Every contract...shall provide that the minimum wage shall be posted by the service provider, contractor, or subcontractor...in a prominent and easily accessible place at the site of the work in English and in the native language of any nonresident worker employed," Babauta said.

MVA

From Page 1

were left vacant following the resignations of MVA's human resource manager, accountant, and research clerk. MVA also has yet to hire a replacement for Benavente, who served as deputy managing director during Jonas Ogren's two-year term as MVA managing director.

Ogren, decided not to renew his contract, which expired on June 18.

In the meantime, MVA public relations and community programs manager Martin Duenas will serve as acting deputy managing director.

"We decided to hold the line and not fill these vacancies until the new fiscal year begins and we see how MVA's finances are going to look like. Besides, I am very comfortable with the staff and management that we have right now," Benavente said.

Still, she added that the MVA board

of directors has instructed her to hire a deputy managing director three months from now. "It's a big job to manage MVA and I could really use some help," she said.

Next in MVA's hiring priority list is the position of assistant marketing manager for Rota. At present, the agency has only eight personnel on the island—all of whom are tasked with tourist site maintenance and repair.

To save money, MVA is also limiting the number of its delegates to off-island travel fairs and marketing events, Benavente said.

A small contingent—including only new MVA board members B.K. Park and Yoichi Matsumura, and Benavente—will represent the agency in the Weddex travel fair in Seoul, Korea from Aug. 4 to 6.

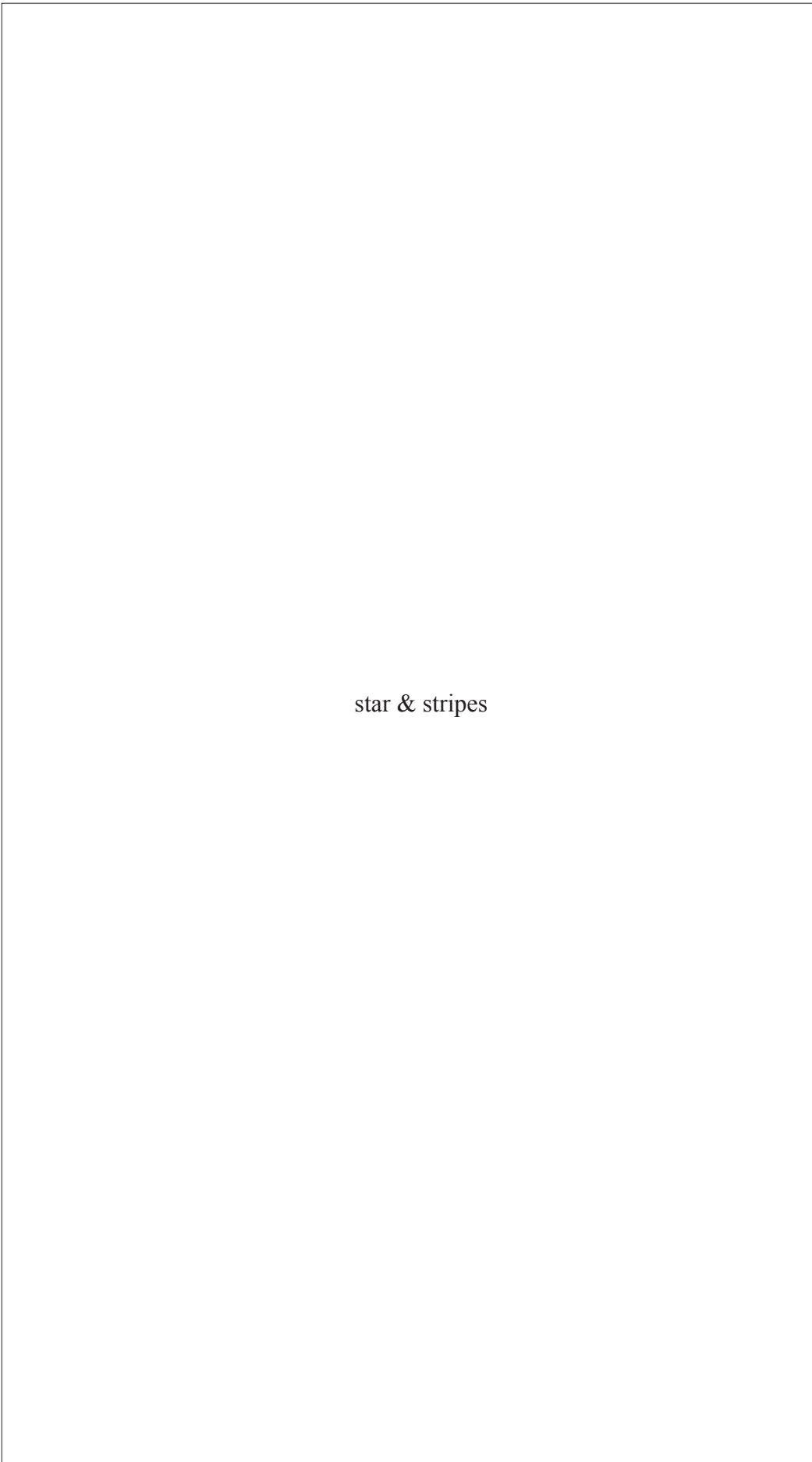
Held twice a year, Weddex is the biggest exhibition of wedding merchandise in Korea.

Island Snapshots

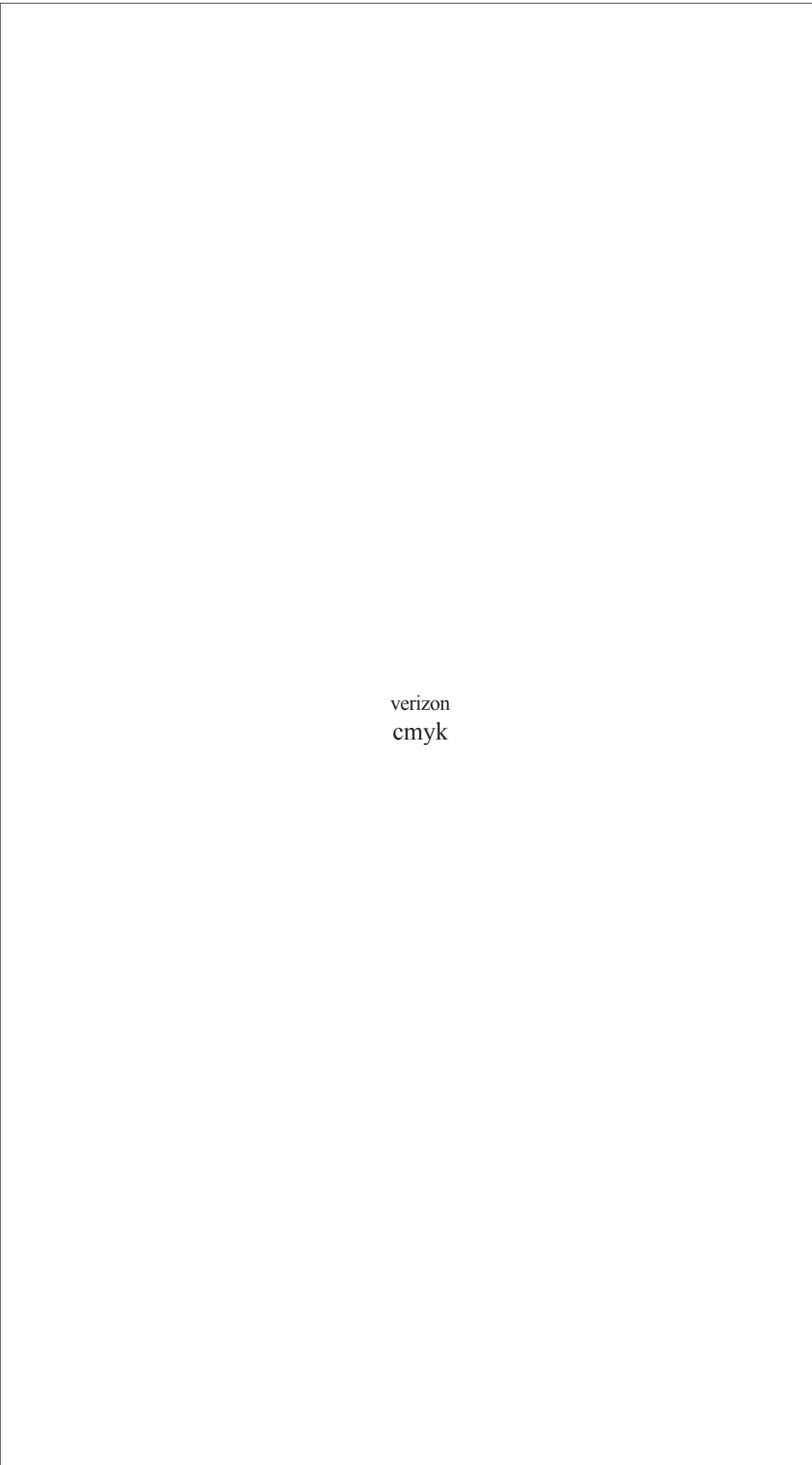
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Nation

9/11 families to track Congress on reforms

By DEVLIN BARRETT
AP WRITER

WASHINGTON (AP)—Families of Sept. 11 victims said Wednesday they will keep a “watchdog” list of any members of Congress who oppose legislation implementing changes recommended by the Sept. 11 commission.

The White House, eager to show it is moving on the politically sensitive issue, said President Bush’s aides were this week finalizing executive orders on intelligence for presentation to Bush.

The orders, if signed by Bush as expected, would immediately put into place some proposals made by the Sept. 11 commission. Bush is expected to approve some or all of them by early next week, a senior administration official said.

On Tuesday, John Kerry, Bush’s Democratic opponent in the presidential campaign, said Bush should implement the commission’s proposals immediately and the panel should be extended another 18 months to ensure reforms are adopted.

A working group created by Bush to study the commis-

sion’s recommendations met by videoconference twice on Wednesday, once with Bush participating.

The Family Steering Committee, activist families who lobbied successfully for an independent commission to investigate the attacks, stepped up pressure on lawmakers to take action on recommendations that need congressional approval.

“We’re going to watch events unfold in Congress, and we want America to watch as well,” said Lorie Van Auken, who lost her husband at the World Trade Center. “We need to have a list of the lawmakers,” she said. “... We need to follow who’s opposing and disagreeing and why.”

Talk of keeping public track of congressional opponents comes even before legislation has been offered to implement the recommendations, a sign of how intent some Sept. 11 families are to maintain the momentum of public opinion for quick changes.

“This watchdog list, this report card, it’s a shame that it’s come to this, but we want to work with everyone to ensure that people aren’t just feigning cooperation,” said Kristen

Breitweiser, one of the most outspoken advocates among Sept. 11 families.

Already, pressure from the families has produced results.

When the commission released its 567-page report last week, Congress had planned to be away for all of August. But several committees quickly scheduled a return to Washington to hold hearings on the panel’s findings.

And House Speaker Dennis

Hastert, R-Ill., announced even more Wednesday. He said at least six committees will hold at least 15 hearings in August on such issues as information sharing, terror financing, intelligence analysis and government reorganization. In a statement, he anticipated congressional action on legislative recommendations in September and October.

The commission’s final report urges rapid fundamental

changes in how the legislative and executive branches oversee the nation’s intelligence apparatus, asking that oversight be consolidated into one group of lawmakers and one person in the White House who answers directly to the president.

Bush, vacationing in Crawford, Texas, held his second videoconference in three days with the White House working group considering the com-

mission’s recommendations. Bush has said he will study the proposals but has stopped short of endorsing them.

On Wednesday afternoon, several of the working group members, including acting CIA Director John McLaughlin, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld, FBI Director Robert Mueller and Attorney General John Ashcroft, met a second time at the White House.

Bush to draft reforms after 9/11 report

By DEVLIN BARRETT
AP WRITER

WASHINGTON (AP)—Pressed by victims’ families and by Democrat John Kerry, the Bush administration is completing draft presidential orders to quickly implement some of the changes recommended by the Sept. 11 commission.

Eager to show it is moving on the politically sensitive issue, the White House said draft executive orders on intelligence were being finished by aides this week for presentation to President Bush. He

is expected to approve some or all by early next week, a senior administration official said Wednesday.

Once signed, the orders would immediately put into place some proposals made by the Sept. 11 commission.

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sion’s recommendations met by videoconference twice Wednesday, once with Bush participating.

The Family Steering Committee, activist families who lobbied successfully for an independent commission to investigate the attacks, stepped up pressure on lawmakers to take action on recommendations that need congressional approval. They said they would draw up a watch list of Congress members who oppose legislation to implement Sept. 11 commission recommendations.

“We’re going to watch events unfold in Congress, and we want America to watch as well,” said Lorie Van Auken, who lost her husband at the World Trade Center. “We need to have a list of the lawmakers. ... We need to follow who’s opposing and disagreeing and why.”

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labor

FBI emerges unscathed from 9/11 report

By CURT ANDERSON
AP WRITER

WASHINGTON (AP)—Few agencies came in for more criticism than the FBI for missteps before the Sept. 11 attacks, but now the bureau is getting good reviews for reforms undertaken by Director Robert Mueller.

The Sept. 11 commission said Mueller is doing what is necessary to address the problems that may have prevented detection of the hijacking plot.

“We think he’s doing exactly the right thing,” said Thomas Kean, commission chairman and a former Republican governor of New Jersey.

In a major victory for the FBI and Justice Department, the commission came down firmly against creation of a new, separate domestic intelligence agency and opted instead to send a “stay the course” message of support for Mueller.

The strong backing for the FBI was surprising, considering the criticism the bureau endured after the attacks. Of the 10 missed “operational opportunities” identified by the commission to potentially disrupt the plot, at least three fell squarely on the FBI.

They include not recognizing that flight student Zacarias Moussaoui in Minnesota might be connected to intelligence indicating an al-Qaida plot involving hijackers and not quickly locating two soon-to-be hijackers the government knew were in the United States.

In addition, the commission said the FBI suffered from a broader inability to “link its col-

lective knowledge of agents in the field to national priorities.”

“It is mystifying that the commissioners didn’t take this on,” said Michael Greenberger, a University of Maryland law professor and former Justice Department counterterrorism official during the Clinton administration. “Mueller has been responsive to the things they were interested in. He has managed to finesse the situation.”

Since the attacks, Mueller has made counterterrorism the FBI’s paramount mission. He has put in place several initiatives to strengthen the FBI’s intelligence capabilities and methods of sharing information, both internally and with other government agencies.

More than 1,450 FBI personnel now work on intelligence in the 56 FBI field offices. Also, there is a new FBI intelligence service and an aggressive program to hire more intelligence analysts.

After last week’s release of the Sept. 11 report, Mueller said he was “gratified and encouraged” by the support. “I am confident that we will successfully complete our transformation,” he said.

The report said it would be a mistake to create a new domestic agency for intelligence similar to the British Security Service, known as MI5. Such an agency, the commission concluded, could be more likely to violate constitutional rights and civil liberties, would take years to put into place and would lack law enforcement powers needed to turn terrorism investigations into criminal prosecutions.

Mueller, Attorney General John Ashcroft and their prede-



Copies of “The 9/11 Commission Report” are seen on display for sale at a Borders bookstore in New York Friday July 23, 2004. AP

cessors in the Clinton administration all opposed creation of a domestic intelligence service, in part because it would simply duplicate FBI work.

The idea of a separate intelligence agency was pushed for months by Sen. John Edwards of North Carolina, the Democratic candidate for vice president. His running mate, Sen. John Kerry of Massachusetts, chose not to endorse the proposal.

The commission warned that the FBI must not be allowed to revert to its old ways: closely holding intelligence for use in criminal prosecutions and rewarding agents more for making arrests than keeping tabs on suspected terrorists.

FBI: Baby food in Calif. contained poison

IRVINE, Calif. (AP)—Authorities found ground-up castor beans with trace amounts of the poison ricin in two jars of baby food that had been tampered with, officials said Wednesday.

U.S. Food and Drug Administration officials who tested the baby food said the ricin was not in the purified form that can be deadly. Rather, it was a less toxic, natural component of the castor beans, which can be obtained from ornamental plants.

“It’s unlikely there would be serious injury with the level of castor bean found in those two jars we tested,” said Dr. David Acheson, chief medical officer with the FDA’s Center for Food, Safety and Applied Nutrition.

Small amounts of the food were eaten, but the babies had no symptoms, he said. No arrests have been made, and authorities have not disclosed a possible motive.

The jars of Gerber Banana Yogurt also contained notes that referred to an Irvine police officer. The exact contents of the notes were not disclosed.

The FBI and Orange County District Attorney’s Office were investigating the discoveries as cases of food tampering. In Washington, two federal law enforcement officials speaking on condition of anonymity because of agency policy said there was no evidence of any widespread ricin contamination of baby food.

On June 16, a man told Irvine police that as he prepared to feed his son, he found a note inside a jar of baby food warning that it had been contaminated. A similar case was reported by an Irvine couple on May 31 involving the same baby food, police said. A note was also found inside that jar.

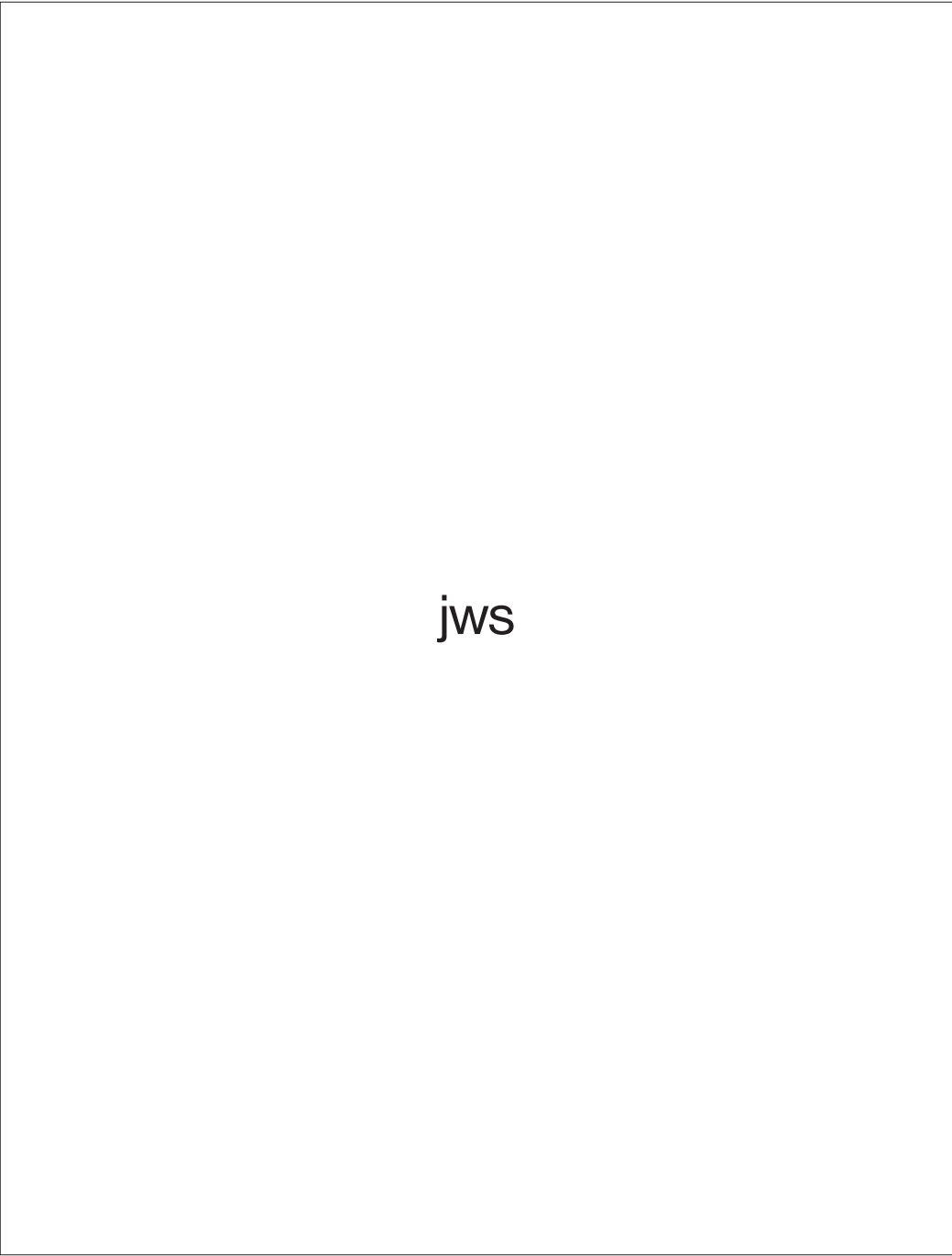
Investigators were testing Gerber Banana Yogurt removed from the store where both jars were purchased.

The Gerber Products Co., based in Parsippany, N.J., is working with investigators. Authorities told the company the contamination “absolutely” occurred after the food was manufactured, said Gerber spokeswoman Terry Boylan.

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Gl: Pushing Iraqis in river was ordered

By ROBERT WELLER
AP WRITER

FORT CARSON, Colo. (AP)—One of four soldiers charged with pushing two Iraqi civilians into a river, where one of them drowned, says he was ordered to do so and told what to say to officials looking into the death, an Army investigator testified Wednesday.

Spc. Terry Bowman said he “was told by his chain of command what version to give” investigators, Sgt. Irene Cintron of the Army’s Criminal Investigation Command said during a teleconference from Iraq as the military convened a hearing to determine whether the soldiers will be court-martialed.

Bowman said he had been ordered to push the men into the Tigris River, Cintron said.

It was not disclosed who gave the order. Three of the soldiers’ commanders have received nonjudicial punishments for their roles in the incident. None of those punishments include jail time.

Sgt. 1st Class Tracy E. Perkins, 33, 1st Lt. Jack M. Saville, 24, and Sgt. Reggie Martinez, 24, are charged with involuntary manslaughter in the Jan. 3 drowning death of a man identified by family members in Iraq as Zaidoun Fadel Hassoun, 19.

Bowman, 21, is charged with assault on allegedly pushing the second man into the river at the same time. That man, a cousin of Hassoun named Marwan Fadel Hassoun, 23, survived the

incident and had described the events to The Associated Press.

Marwan Hassoun said he tried to help his cousin swim to safety, only to lose his grip as the soldiers watched and laughed. “They were behaving like they were watching a comedy on stage,” he told the AP several weeks ago.

Perkins, Martinez and Bowman appeared at Wednesday’s Article 32 hearing, which is similar to a civilian grand jury hearing. Saville’s hearing is tentatively scheduled for Sept. 9. The four soldiers face between 5 1/2 years and 26 1/2 years in prison if they are tried and convicted.

According to Cintron, investigators learned of the death in an e-mail from the victim’s family. She said she met with Marwan Hassoun on Jan. 16; he told her how they were stopped after getting supplies in Baghdad and then driven to the bridge several miles north of Samarra.

Marwan Hassoun said he watched the soldiers push his cousin into the water and then he was pushed in, Cintron testified. He said he could hear his cousin screaming.

“He said it was eight meters (24 feet) deep and at no point did he feel the bottom of the river,” she said. She described the drop from the bridge as 10-12 feet.

After he got out on the bank, Hassoun said he could hear the soldiers above laughing as they drove away. He said he went back to a checkpoint “soaking wet from the river” and reported

what happened, Cintron said.

His cousin’s body was found two or three miles downriver.

Martinez initially told investigators neither he nor anyone in his platoon pushed anyone in the river, Cintron said. A week later, on Jan. 23, Martinez said he had gone to the river’s edge with the men, “kicked one in the butt” but the man jumped in on his own.

Sgt. Alexis Rincon, a member of the patrol that night, testified the soldiers forced the men to jump and that Martinez leveled a rifle at one of them. Rincon said the man hesitated, but jumped after the second Iraqi said something to him in Arabic.

None of soldiers thought the men were in danger because one quickly made it to shore, Rincon said. He said he would not have left the scene had he known one of the men was drowning, but asked if he would have gone to the man’s aid, Rincon replied: “I don’t know about jumping in and saving him.”

The soldiers’ commanders, Lt. Col. Nathan Sassaman, Maj. Robert Gwinner and Capt. Matthew Cunningham, were punished last spring under Article 15, which allows punishments without a court proceeding or public record. Rep. Joel Hefley, R-Colo., has asked for congressional hearings into why their cases were handled differently than those of the soldiers.

The soldiers are assigned to Fort Carson’s 3rd Brigade Combat Team. The brigade is part of the 4th Infantry Division, based at Fort Hood, Texas.

Parents sue over American held by Saudis

WASHINGTON (AP)—An American jailed in Saudi Arabia for more than a year should have the same chance in U.S. courts to contest his detention that the Supreme Court has given foreign-born terrorism suspects, his lawyers said Wednesday.

A lawsuit filed in federal court contends the United States ordered Ahmed Abu Ali’s arrest in Saudi Arabia in an attempt to keep him beyond the reach of U.S. courts and in the hands of jailers who could abuse or torture him for information.

The suit is the latest fallout from the Supreme Court’s ruling last month that foreign men arrested abroad and held at a Navy prison camp at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, can use American courts to contest their detention.

Abu Ali’s lawyers argued that the U.S. government controls his fate even though he is in Saudi custody.

In June, the Supreme Court rejected the government’s argument that U.S. courts are off-limits to the Guantanamo prisoners, because the prison is in Cuba. That same reasoning should apply to Abu Ali, his lawyers argued.

“Abu Ali in this case meets similar jurisdictional criteria, and, especially as a U.S. citizen, should be afforded this fundamental right,” lawyers from the

World Organization for Human Rights USA wrote.

Abu Ali, who was born in Houston, was arrested in June 2003 as he took a university exam in Saudi Arabia, his parents alleged in the suit filed on his behalf. The FBI has questioned Abu Ali at least twice, but he has not been charged with any crime or allowed to see a lawyer, the suit said.

The Saudi government has no plan to charge him and would release him to U.S. custody if asked, the suit said.

Federal prosecutors in Virginia tried to link Abu Ali this year to other men who later were convicted of training for holy war against the United States by playing paintball games in the Virginia woods.

A federal prosecutor said one of the defendants had Abu Ali’s telephone number on a handwritten address list and that Abu Ali joined an al-Qaida cell in Saudi Arabia in 2001.

Six men pleaded guilty and three were convicted at trial in the paintball case. One received a life sentence. Abu Ali was not charged in the case.

“From the very first day we do not believe the allegations,” Abu Ali’s sister, Tasneem Abu Ali, said Wednesday.

A grand jury heard evidence

in her brother’s case but has not issued an indictment, she said.

“We felt like the U.S. government was avoiding the judicial process in the United States ... and the reason they were keeping him there is that they weren’t able to charge him,” in U.S. courts, Tasneem Abu Ali said.

The suit asked a U.S. judge to order the 23-year-old returned to the United States, where he might face charges. It names Attorney General John Ashcroft, Secretary of State Colin Powell and others.

Justice Department spokesman Mark Corallo refused comment Wednesday on the suit.

It is a case that probably would not have been filed before the Supreme Court rulings last month that outlined legal rights for citizens and noncitizens detained in the war on terrorism, lawyers said.

“The Supreme Court opened the door, and this kind of suit was expected,” said Michael Greenberger, who specializes in constitutional law and counterterrorism at the University of Maryland’s law school.

The court’s ruling in the Guantanamo case appeared to be limited to the approximately 650 prisoners held at the Cuban base. Dissenters in that case and outside lawyers, however, said the ruling might be applied more broadly.

Police continue search for Utah woman

By PAUL FOY
AP WRITER

SALT LAKE CITY (AP)—Police with cadaver dogs searched fruitlessly in the early morning darkness Wednesday for clues to the whereabouts of a missing pregnant woman, while her family closed down a command post for volunteers.

The canine crews found “nothing of consequence” at the municipal landfill before breaking off for the day, but they have not finished methodically churning up 15 feet of garbage and dirt over a wide area, Detective Phil Eslinger said Wednesday. The search was conducted overnight because the dogs

work more effectively in the cooler air, authorities have said.

Also Wednesday, the families of Mark and Lori Hacking shut down their volunteer command post at a Mormon meeting house after calling off an organized search of neighborhoods, industrial areas and nearby canyons.

The voluntary community search for Lori Hacking, 27, had been called off Tuesday, eight days after her husband, Mark, reported that she had not returned from an early morning jog.

Organizers said the search was moving from neighborhoods, industrial areas and nearby canyons into more rugged terrain, and they did not want volunteers getting hurt.



Family spokesman Scott Dunaway addresses the media during a news conference Tuesday, July 27, 2004 in Salt Lake City, regarding search efforts for Lori Hacking, who has been missing since July 19.

NJ body confirmed to be missing girl

TOMS RIVER, N.J. (AP)—A naked body unearthed from a shallow grave was identified as that of a 16-year-old girl believed murdered by a family acquaintance, authorities said Wednesday.

Officers with search dogs found the body Tuesday in the woods about two miles from Brittney Gregory’s house in Brick Township. She was last heard from on July 11, when she called her mother.

Jack Fuller, 38, a friend of Brittney’s father, has been charged with murder and jailed on \$1 million bail. He has a history of drug and theft-related arrests and got out of prison last year.

“We are absolutely convinced that he’s the guy who did it,” said prosecutor Robert Gasser.

Investigators said the cause of death had not been established, and tests were being done to determine whether the girl had been sexually assaulted.

Investigators have not said why they believe Fuller was involved or why they had been searching the marshy area since July 18.

It was not immediately clear whether Fuller had an attorney.

The body was identified using fingerprints and dental records.

Gasser said no decision on whether to seek the death penalty has been made.

Volunteers had gathered to help search even after Mark Hacking, 28, came under scrutiny for buying a new mattress shortly before reporting his wife missing as well as lying to his wife, family and police about being accepted to a North Carolina medical school.

“We learned a lot of things in his life that are not true,” Detective Dwayne Baird said Tuesday. “Medical school was the pinnacle of that deception.”

The nightshift hospital orderly was checked into a psychiatric ward by his family after being found outside, naked, a night after the search for his wife began.

Assistant District Attorney Bob Stott said Mark Hacking is free to leave the hospital. Hacking, who has not been charged with a crime, did not return a phone message left Tuesday with an administrator at the University of Utah hospital.

Federal court oks ban on sale of sex toys

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (AP)—A federal appeals court Wednesday upheld a 1998 Alabama law banning the sale of sex toys in the state, ruling the Constitution doesn’t include a right to sexual privacy.

In a 2-1 decision overturning a lower court, a three-judge panel of the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals said the state has a right to police the sale of devices that can be sexually stimulating.

The American Civil Liberties Union, which represented merchants and users who sued to overturn the law, asked the appeals court to rule that the Constitution included a right

to sexual privacy that the ban on sex toy sales would violate. The court declined, indicating such a decision could lead down other paths.

“If the people of Alabama in time decide that a prohibition on sex toys is misguided, or ineffective, or just plain silly, they can repeal the law and be finished with the matter,” the court said.

“On the other hand, if we today craft a new fundamental right by which to invalidate the law, we would be bound to give that right full force and effect in all future cases including, for example, those involving adult incest, prostitution, obscenity, and the like.”

Man survives alligator attack with punch

TAVARES, Fla. (AP)—An 11-foot alligator attacked a man pulling weeds along the shore of a lake, but he saved himself by punching the beast in the nose. The man was later arrested on grand theft charges unrelated to the incident.

Guy R. Daelemans, 43, suffered leg wounds in Tuesday’s attack on Lake Eustis in central Florida, Lake County sheriff’s Lt. Todd Luce said. He was treated and released from a hospital.

A trapper summoned by wildlife officials caught the

385-pound alligator, which was then killed.

Daelemans was arrested Wednesday on charges including grand theft. He’s accused of taking money from a homeowner to build a boat dock, then failing to finish the job. He was being held in jail on \$50,000 bond.

Last week, a 54-year-old landscaper died of infection two days after a 12-foot alligator dragged her into a pond on Sanibel Island in southwestern Florida. That alligator was also trapped and killed.

ctsi

Asia

Indian children infected with AIDS suffer discrimination

By **NIRMALA GEORGE**
AP WRITER

NEW DELHI (AP)—Sitting cross-legged on the cement floor of a home for abandoned children, 7-year-old Rupa—one of at least 60,000 Indian children infected with the AIDS virus—laughed excitedly, clicking the beads on an abacus.

“I’ve done it. I’ve won,” she shouted, finishing her simple math problem ahead of a dozen other children crowding the sparsely furnished room.

Rupa’s bright eyes and high-spirited nature do not reflect her harrowing tale—of being shunned by neighbors and turned away from the homes of relatives when they learned she had tested positive for HIV, contracted at birth from her mother.

India and the United Nations have said 5.1 million adults are infected with the HIV virus here, the second-highest number in the world after South Africa.

Child sufferers are not included in that figure, but the government’s AIDS control agency said 60,000 Indian children have the virus, while independent organizations have said the number may be closer to 100,000.

It was unclear how those numbers rank in comparison to other countries, but a report released Wednesday by Human Rights Watch said the Indian government is putting millions at risk by ignoring such children.

“Children affected by HIV/AIDS are being discriminated

against in education and health services, denied care by orphanages, and pushed onto the streets and into the worst forms of child labor,” Zama Coursen-Neff, the author of the report, told The Associated Press in an interview.

When a parent is infected, children drop out of school to care for them, or go to work to replace the lost income, until they become orphans, she said.

“Many doctors refuse to treat or even touch HIV-positive children,” Human Rights Watch said. “Some schools expel or segregate children because they or their parents are HIV-positive.”

The report urged the Indian government to adopt laws banning discrimination, specifically ensuring that no child is kept out of school. It also called on the state to care for all children whose parents are unable to provide for them because of the disease, and suggested an extensive public information campaign.

In India, the virus initially infected prostitutes, their clients, drug addicts, and both homosexual and bisexual men. But it has spread to housewives, some of whom were infected by husbands who may have visited a prostitute or may be bisexual.

In a society where females are already undervalued—receiving less food, education and medical care—contracting the HIV virus is an additional burden because of the scarce resources available to them.

This was evident in Rupa’s case. Rupa’s mother died of AIDS 10 years after she contract-

ed the disease from her husband, who was a truck driver. Her two children were also infected.

“Rupa’s younger brother, who has also tested positive, was taken back to the village by the children’s father. But he left Rupa at our doorstep, saying the villagers would not welcome a girl child,” said Doe Nair, head of the women’s group that runs the children’s home.

Almost all the girls at the government-funded home have been abandoned by their families after testing positive for HIV, Nair said.

“The premium for a male

child is so high in Indian society that families are ready to spend on his medical treatment and care,” Nair said.

AIDS activists say young girls, orphaned after the death of their parents, are often thrown out of their homes and eventually pushed into prostitution.

At the mercy of pimps and brothel owners, they cannot insist that clients use a condom, said Anjali Gopalan, executive director of the Naz Foundation, a health agency that runs one of the few private clinics for AIDS patients in New Delhi.

“The discrimination that girls

with HIV/AIDS face in the home, community and at the work place has remained largely invisible to government policy makers. There are no programs that focus on their problems,” said Kousalya Perisamy of the Positive Women Network, an activist group working in southern Tamil Nadu state.

Meenakshi Dutta-Ghosh, who heads the Indian government’s National AIDS Control Organization, said the government may have ignored children with HIV in the past, but she argued that health authorities have refocused their prevention and care programs in the last two years.

“Earlier, for whatever reason, children were not a priority. This has changed. We are looking at children and young people as a category of focused attention,” Dutta-Ghosh said.

The government had not given a figure for the number of child victims before, but Dutta-Ghosh offered the 60,000 estimate in an interview this week.

She said the government was working with independent groups and state welfare programs to reach children outside the regular school network, including street children, dropouts and child prostitutes.

Singapore outgoing PM wants improved ties with Middle East

SINGAPORE (AP)—Singapore’s outgoing prime minister wants to focus on boosting ties to the Middle East after he hands power to his successor on Aug. 12.

“I would like to concentrate on a few projects on the international side because I think the new (prime minister) will also have to consolidate his domestic ground, even as he reaches out to have his own international network of contacts,” Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong told reporters late Wednesday.

Goh’s remarks are the first indication of his plans after he hands power to his deputy, Lee Hsien Loong.

“I’m very keen on developing better ties with the Middle East,” Goh said. “I started this visiting several countries like Egypt, Jordan, Bahrain.... and then to Iran.”

Singapore’s foreign policy has for some years been dominated by forging closer ties with the rising giants of China and, more recently, India. Only lately has the Middle East come into focus.

“It’s an area where we have not had sufficient attachment

until now,” Goh said. “Fortunately for us, the Arabs are also looking toward the East to expand their economic and diplomatic space, in a way.”

His remarks came after comments earlier this week from Lee Kuan Yew—Singapore’s first prime minister and the father of the leader-in-waiting—that Goh would be the number-two in the new Cabinet, although his exact title remains unclear.

Singapore has shown greater interest in the Middle East under Goh, who visited countries in the region including Pakistan and Iran shortly before announcing he would step down.

The city-state has agreed to launch free-trade talks with Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Kuwait and Pakistan, and the government has also said it wants to “explore” trade pacts with Oman and Qatar.

Goh’s comments echo those made earlier this month by Trade Minister George Yeo.

“We are now reviewing our policy on the Middle East and will give the region greater importance in future,” Yeo said.

brown tree
snake

Religious riots in India leave 2 dead

By RUPAK SANYAL
AP WRITER

VERAVAL, India (AP)—Muslims and Hindus burned buildings and clashed with police Wednesday in a third day of sectarian riots in this western Indian town, throwing acid at officers who shot at the crowd. The unrest has left two dead and more than a dozen wounded.

Thousands of police patrolled the streets, fearing the religious violence could escalate. More than 1,000 people were killed in three months of Hindu-Muslim rioting two years ago in Gujarat state, where the coastal town of Veraval is located.

Police said the recent fighting began Monday when young Muslim males heckled a passing Hindu girl, sparking riots and clashes. Two small mosques and about 25 shops were burned.

A curfew was lifted Wednesday but reimposed within hours after fighting broke out again, police officer T.S. Bist said.

Police fired about 20 rounds at crowds that were burning shops and fish warehouses, Bist said. Six protesters were hospitalized. Rioters retaliated by throwing acid bombs at police officers, four of whom were hospitalized, Bist said.

The violence spread to Rajkot,



Policemen walk past a burning building on the outskirts of Veraval, 350 kilometers (218.76 miles) southwest of Ahmadabad, India, Wednesday July 28, 2004.

another town in Gujarat state, where Hindus and Muslims clashed Wednesday. Officers fired tear gas and used bamboo sticks to break up rioters, who also burned two cars, police said.

Muslim residents of Veraval demanded the reconstruction of three Islamic shrines they said were burned by Hindus.

“Unfortunately, even police

did not bother to stop these fanatics who attacked the places of religious worship,” Maqbool Hussain, a Muslim community leader, told The Associated Press.

Superintendent of police B.D. Vaghela said the people who attacked on the shrines had been arrested and security tightened at all places of worship.

Several local Hindus accused

Muslims of throwing stones at a Hindu temple in Veraval.

“If they attack our places of worship, we can’t sit idle,” Muslim Yousuf Shaikh said.

Veraval, is located 220 miles southwest of Ahmadabad, Gujarat’s main commercial center. The riots two years ago erupted after 60 Hindus traveling in a train were burned to death.

Bombs kill 2, wound 3 in northwestern Pakistan

By SADAQAT JAN
AP WRITER

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan (AP)—Two homemade bombs exploded about 25 minutes apart in a park in northwestern Pakistan on Wednesday, killing a suspected bomber and an intelligence official and wounding three policemen.

The man killed by the first ex-

plosion is suspected of planting the bombs, which went off in Kohat, a garrison city 30 miles south of Peshawar and not far from the Afghan border, Maj. Gen. Shaukat Sultan said.

The second explosion killed the intelligence official and wounded three policemen who were called to investigate the initial blast, said Sultan, the

chief army spokesman.

The blasts occurred in a part of Kohat where army offices, a military hospital and homes of army officers are located.

Sultan called the bombings “a terrorist act,” but did not say who was involved and denied reports that the man killed was a suicide bomber. He said security forces were investigating

the attacker’s identity.

Pakistan is a key ally of the United States in the campaign against terror that ousted the Taliban regime from Afghanistan. The government’s decision to side with America has angered Islamic militants, who have been accused of carrying out bombings and attacks targeting Westerners in Pakistan.

Philippines objects to Australia slam

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—The Philippines angrily summoned the Australian ambassador Wednesday, saying it objected to criticism that a concession to Iraqi insurgents to save the life of a Filipino captive has encouraged terrorism.

Ambassador Ruth Pearce was called in after Australian Foreign Secretary Alexander Downer blamed the Philippines and Spain for a new threat against Australia by a purported al-Qaida affiliate.

Downer said terrorists had been energized by the Philippines’ early withdrawal of troops from Iraq to save hostage Angelo dela Cruz from being beheaded, and by Spain’s pull out after the Madrid train bombings in March.

The United States has also criticized the troop withdrawals.

Philippine Foreign Secretary Delia Albert said she told the Australian envoy that “we strongly object to the broad characterization made by these officials in these statements, particularly those that question the resolve of the Philippines to fight terrorism.”

“I also conveyed in very strong terms that we find very objectionable the liability attributed to the Philippines for subsequent acts of hostage-taking in Iraq,” she said, adding that kidnapping there was already on the rise.

Pearce sounded more conciliatory in describing the meeting, possibly trying to

defuse an escalating war of words. “This issue should not affect our good relationship,” she said. “Let’s move on.”

Both women said the focus should be on fighting terrorism. Pearce reiterated Australia’s commitment to cooperation in that area.

“We have to get on with the task at hand, which is to fight terrorism in the interest of maintaining good relations and avoiding any further misunderstanding,” Albert said. “The Philippines hopes that any further concerns by Australian officials on this issue can be addressed through diplomatic channels.”

On Wednesday, Prime Minister John Howard defended Downer’s statements, saying his foreign minister was “strongly putting the view that you do not give in to terrorists, and I totally support him.”

Earlier, President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo said she would not apologize for her decision to withdraw the troops and explained that her move was meant to protect the 1.5 million Filipino workers in the Middle East, including more than 4,000 in Iraq.

“The Philippines has no policy that demands sacrifice of human lives,” Arroyo said in her state-of-the-nation address Monday.

She said sacrificing dela Cruz would have been “pointless” and would put the lives of Filipinos in the Middle East at risk “by making them part of the war.”

HK newspaper challenges raids

HONG KONG (AP)—A Hong Kong newspaper sought Wednesday to revoke a search warrant used by anti-graft officials to seize documents and computer files from its office, and demanded that the confiscated items be returned.

The Independent Commission Against Corruption, or ICAC, drew international condemnation after raiding seven newspapers that published the name of a protected witness over the weekend.

Lawyers for the Sing Tao Daily submitted documents to the High Court, seeking to annul a search warrant and demanding the commission disclose the document used to apply for the warrant, according to a newspaper spokesman who would not give his name.

“We want to see what rights the ICAC has under the law, and whether its actions are legal and reasonable,” said Ho Man-kei, a lawyer for Sing Tao, in comments broadcast by Hong Kong network Cable TV.

On Tuesday, the U.S. government voiced concerns over press freedom in Hong Kong

and urged the ICAC to carry out its investigation into the naming of the witness “in a lawful and appropriate manner.”

“Our position would be to urge that Hong Kong’s civil liberties, including its press freedoms, be protected, as guaranteed,” State Department deputy spokesman Adam Ereli said in Washington.

A Chinese official here criticized the State Department’s comments as improper meddling in Hong Kong’s affairs.

Hong Kong officials have insisted press freedoms were not at risk. But Hong Kong newspapers as well as local and international media watchdog groups have charged that officials are intimidating journalists at a time when critics fear local freedoms are under threat from Beijing.

The Hong Kong government insists it will abide by the territory’s mini-constitution, the Basic Law, which has guaranteed Western-style civil liberties since Britain returned this former colony to China in July 1997.

The ICAC insisted that its action was justified and within the law.

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Cleric won't be charged in Bali bombings

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP)— Indonesian police dropped plans Wednesday to charge a radical cleric in the 2002 Bali bombings, but said the man Washington accuses of being a terror mastermind in Southeast Asia will remain in jail.

The 65-year-old Abu Bakar Bashir will be charged with other crimes, including heading the al-Qaida-linked Jemaah Islamiyah terror group and a deadly suicide attack last year on Jakarta's J.W. Marriott Hotel, chief detective Suyitno Landung said. Jemaah Islamiyah was blamed for both attacks.

The announcement followed last week's landmark ruling by the Constitutional Court, which barred the retroactive use of an anti-terror law rushed through parliament after the Bali bombings. The explosions killed 202 people, mostly foreign tourists.

Lawyers for 32 militants found guilty in the Bali attacks have vowed to appeal, despite court and government officials who have insisted the ruling cannot be applied retroactively and won't affect the convictions.

Bashir, Indonesia's best known Islamic militant, was arrested under the anti-terror law. His lawyers have argued he should be immediately released. Attorney Wirawan Adnan said the decision to drop the Bali charges showed the police case against Bashir was weak.

"They are trying to find whatever reason they can to keep him in jail," Adnan said. "This only proves they are doing this because of foreign influence."

Bashir has long proved difficult to convict on terror charges. The slender, white-bearded preacher, an admirer of Osama bin Laden, was first arrested three weeks after the Bali bombings amid intense international pressure for Indonesia to crack down on extremism.

He denies any involvement in terror, and prosecutors failed to make terror and treason charges stick, but Bashir was sentenced to three years in prison for immigration violations. That ruling was later cut in half on appeal.

Police immediately arrested him when he was released from prison in April, and said they intended to charge him in the Bali blasts using the anti-terror law.

On Wednesday, Landung said the Constitutional Court ruling had forced them to rethink their strategy.

"We are now working on our charges that he is the leader of Jemaah Islamiyah and is responsible for other bombings," he told reporters.

Landung said prosecutors were still trying to determine if parts of the anti-terror law could be applied to Bashir. His trial is expected to begin later this year.

Justice Minister Yusril Mahendra said Monday that the Constitutional Court ruling had hampered the case against Bashir, but insisted he would remain in jail.

Earlier this year, U.S. Home-

land Security chief Tom Ridge said in Jakarta that Bashir had "intense and deep involvement in the planning and execution of terrorist activities." Australia's foreign minister called Bashir a "loathsome creature" and said he should remain behind bars.

His case is sensitive in Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim nation. Authorities want to be aggressive in the U.S.-led anti-terror war while not being seen as subject to Washington's influence.

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World

Jewish settlers begin compensation talks

By **ARTHUR MAX**
AP WRITER

JERUSALEM (AP)—Israel has started compensation talks with Jewish settlers ready to leave the West Bank and Gaza Strip, their lawyer said Wednesday, as part of an evacuation plan that has fueled a Palestinian power struggle.

With the Israeli pullout plan moving forward, Palestinian Prime Minister Ahmed Qureia began asserting his authority over a branch of the security forces Wednesday, a concession he won from Yasser Arafat after a 10-day standoff that paralyzed the Palestinian leadership.

U.S. and Israeli leaders—and many Palestinians—have voiced skepticism that the deal struck Tuesday was the last word in the tussle between Arafat and a corps of politicians and young militants bridle under his dictatorial rule.

Political tensions among the Palestinians were heightened by Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's plan to withdraw the army and all Jewish settlers from Gaza by next September.

Israeli Justice Ministry officials held their first meeting with a lawyer representing 90 families living in the Gaza settlements and four in the West Bank, also slated for evacuation, over compensation for voluntarily leaving their homes.

The lawyer, Joseph Tamir, said advance payments could be made as early as this October, though it was unclear how much money the settlers would receive or when they would have to move.

"They were playing their cards very close to the chest," Tamir said, "but an advance that



Palestinians take cover from Israeli gunfire as bulldozers raze Palestinian farms after the Israeli army closed the main beach road that connects the Gaza Strip, north and south, in the outskirts of Gaza city, Wednesday July 28, 2004.

does not reflect the ability to buy a new home is not realistic."

Nearly all the families moved to the settlements for economic reasons rather than an ideological commitment, Tamir said.

Ideologues among the settlers threaten to resist evacuation, charging that giving up a few settlements means abandoning parts of the God-given Jewish homeland and would endanger Israel's security.

Sharon says, however, the unilateral withdrawal of civilians and the military from Gaza would reduce friction and end rule over more than 1 million Palestinians. He also has said it would help entrench Israel in the West Bank, to which he attaches a higher priority.

The Israeli military said Wednesday that soldiers dis-

covered a Palestinian tunnel near one of the isolated Gaza settlements, Netzarim, near Gaza City. The military said the tunnel was to be used for smuggling weapons for an attack.

Israel's unilateral pullout plan has contributed to the Palestinian power struggle, with rival groups jockeying for position to control the poverty-stricken seaside strip after Israel leaves. Israel's government refuses to coordinate its moves with Arafat's Palestinian Authority, adding impetus to the competition.

Secretary of State Colin Powell discussed the Gaza pullout with Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak in Cairo on Wednesday.

Washington believes the proposal can create an opportunity for progress toward peace, and Egypt has agreed to work with

the Palestinians and the Israelis to ensure order after the proposed Israeli pullout.

Following a wave of unrest earlier this month, Arafat and Qureia became locked in a struggle to control the security services. On Tuesday, Arafat yielded authority to Qureia over the police and internal security services, while keeping responsibility for intelligence and military forces.

In return, Qureia rescinded his resignation, submitted 10 days earlier to protest his inability to deal with the lawlessness.

Hassan Abu Libdeh, the secretary of the Palestinian Cabinet, said Qureia "started today his talks with the security leaders and consulted them about the function of the internal security apparatus to impose law and order."

Colombia warlords defend peace process

BOGOTA, Colombia (AP)—Three right-wing warlords flew out of their rural safe haven for an unprecedented address Wednesday at Colombia's Congress, trying to convince a skeptical nation of their commitment to peace despite persistent killings.

Opposition lawmakers and critics condemned the government-backed trip, saying it bestowed political legitimacy on some of the worst killers and drug traffickers in the Western Hemisphere.

"In Colombia today, nothing is more urgent and pressing than opening paths of peace and reconciliation," Salvatore Mancuso, the supreme commander of the 13,000-strong United Self-Defense Forces said in a speech to lawmakers. The group formally opened disarmament talks with the government this month.

Mancuso and commanders Ramon Isaza and Ivan Roberto Duque all shed their camouflage fatigues for dark suits and

ties before boarding an air force plane to fly from their northwestern stronghold to Bogota. They were greeted by a massive police escort.

President Alvaro Uribe granted the men a two-day safe conduct pass, giving them immunity from arrest for their alleged roles in human rights abuses committed during their two-decade dirty war against Marxist rebels.

In his speech, Mancuso defended the United Self-Defense Forces, calling his fighters "heroes" who for years protected the Colombian people from guerrilla attacks in the absence of state authority.

He offered no apology for the thousands of victims of paramilitary violence, but said United Self-Defense Forces commanders were discussing some form of compensation.

Washington has issued an extradition order against Man-

cuso on cocaine smuggling charges, while Isaza and Duque both appear on a U.S. Treasury Department list of "significant" drug traffickers.

Some 1,500 police and army troops, backed by bomb-sniffer dogs, took up positions in a wide area around the congressional building in downtown Bogota amid fears that rebels might try to launch an attack.

Dozens of people protested the warlords' visit outside Congress, many wearing white skeleton masks to symbolize those killed by paramilitary gunmen and chanting "never forget."

The peace process "is a capitulation to impunity and injustice in Colombia," said Ivan Cepeda, whose father, former senator Manuel Cepeda, was slain by paramilitary gunmen in 1994.

"What the process needs is for both sides to tell the truth, something they have not done," said independent Sen. Carlos Moreno,

accusing the paramilitaries of taking part in the talks only to avoid jail terms and extradition.

Vice President Francisco Santos, however, said the peace talks were necessary to remove some 13,000 fighters from a conflict that claims thousands of lives every year.

"What we hope is that when this government's term ends (in 2006), they will have demobilized," Santos said.

Congress is set to play a crucial role in the talks, however, as Uribe needs lawmakers to approve legislation that would give him the negotiating flexibility to offer United Self-Defense Forces leaders an amnesty or reduced prison sentences in return for laying down their guns.

Mancuso was also expected to use the trip to get a medical checkup, something he has been unable to do for several years while living as a fugitive, officials said.

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Powell, Saudis weigh Muslim force in Iraq



U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell gestures during a press conference under a poster of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak at the foreign ministry in Cairo Wednesday, July 28, 2004.

By **GEORGE GEDDA**
AP WRITER

JIDDAH, Saudi Arabia (AP)—With American support, Saudi Arabia is taking the lead in trying to form a Muslim security force to help Iraq overcome its 15-month-old insurgency, U.S. and Saudi officials said Wednesday.

Secretary of State Colin Powell discussed the issue with top Saudi officials after a stop in Egypt and had it on his agenda for Thursday's talks with Iraq's prime minister, Ayad Allawi, in Jiddah.

Word of the Saudis' effort came on the same day as a suicide car bomb northeast of Baghdad killed 68 Iraqis and wounded 56 others. It was the insurgents' deadliest strike since Al-lawi took office as head of the interim government a month ago.

CAIRO, Egypt (AP)—The man who faced reporters Wednesday looked and sounded like any forward-looking, business-minded young Egyptian's ideal president for the 21st century. There's just one problem: Gamal Mubarak's father is Hosni Mubarak, president of Egypt for the past 23 years, and many Egyptians are wary of replicating the dynastic politics common elsewhere in the Arab world.

At his news conference, it was no surprise that many of the questions danced around the sensitive issue of succession, and that none got anything close to a definitive answer. What was new was the openness of the occa-

sion—the invitation to foreign journalists to attend and ask questions.

Gamal Mubarak, 40, has big reformist ideas for his nation of 70 million. He was educated at the American University in Cairo and was an investment banker. In an Arab world aflame with anti-American anger and shifting closer to its Islamic roots, Mubarak Jr. speaks English with an American accent and leads an outwardly secular life, frequenting trendy restaurants and night spots.

As head of the ruling National Democratic Party's policy-making committee, he has been promoting ambitious plans to liberalize the economy, reform

to Central Europe and the Middle East, declined comment.

His spokesman, Richard Boucher, said, "We discussed some ideas tonight with the Saudis that they have been discussing with others about how to facilitate the deployment of troops from Muslim countries. The goal is to help Iraqis establish security. It's a goal that they support, that we support and we'll keep talking to them about it."

Saudi officials said the kingdom is normalizing relations with Iraq for the first time since Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990.

President Bush, in a telephone call Wednesday to Abdullah from his Texas ranch, thanked the crown prince for meeting with Powell. "The two of them discussed the situation in Iraq and Saudi efforts to fight terror on its own soil," said a White House spokesman, Trent Duffy.

Mubarak's son avoids issue of presidency

the banking sector, and develop economic relations with the outside world. At his news conference he had little to say about democratic reform. But he claimed to be in touch with public opinion through opinion polls and large gatherings across the country.

His father, who is 76, has given no indication he is about to retire, and has no vice president who might succeed him. But whoever it is will face huge challenges—chronic poverty and unemployment, an entrenched bureaucracy, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict raging to the east. Egypt has fought a bloody Islamic insurgency and has bred some of the world's most notorious terrorists.

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Diplomats worry Iran resumes nuke testing

By **GEORGE JAHN**
AP WRITER

VIENNA, Austria (AP)—Defying international concerns, Iran has resumed clandestine work linked to uranium enrichment, testing equipment and producing a gas that can be used to make nuclear warheads, diplomats said Wednesday.

The diplomats told The Associated Press that Tehran has restarted equipment used to make uranium hexafluoride gas, which, when injected into centrifuges and spun, can be enriched to a level high enough to make the weapons.

While Iran only appears to be testing the machinery, it has apparently produced some of the gas as a side effect, said the diplomats, who are either familiar with Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency's investigations or privy to intelligence. Speaking on condition of anonymity, they said they did not know how much hexafluoride was made and when the testing resumed.

The move—coupled with revelations Tuesday that Iran had restarted building centrifuges—heightened concern that Iran was moving toward full uranium enrichment, despite pledges not to do so in the interest of building international goodwill.

In Washington, State Department spokesman Adam Ereli said Iran had launched a direct challenge to the IAEA's call to suspend all enrichment-related and reprocessing activities.

"It certainly raises questions about other commitments Iran has made concerning its nuclear program," he said.

Iran dismissed accusations it is interested in making nuclear weapons, insisting its main interest in nuclear power is to

generate electricity. But one of the diplomats said the news was part of a pattern of recent revelations showing Iran to be more interested in pressing ahead with suspect nuclear activities than working to dispel worldwide concerns.

IAEA officials had no comment about the revelations, which came only a day after diplomats disclosed that Tehran had resumed building centrifuges.

That move alarmed France, Germany and Britain, which have been seeking a negotiated resolution with Iran, and was likely to move them closer to the United States, which insists Tehran wants to make nuclear weapons.

German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer expressed "great concern" Wednesday over the reported restart of centrifuge construction, and cautioned Iran against making a "miscalculation."

Separately, diplomats citing an intelligence report also told AP that Iran is trying to make or buy deuterium gas, a substance that has peaceful uses but can also be used to boost the power of a nuclear explosion.

One of the diplomats said Iranian agents were trying to buy the gas on the Russian market and had plans to manufacture it domestically. But Russia's Foreign Ministry said that Moscow "does not plan to make such deliveries."

Beyond increasing the punch of nuclear warheads, the gas also can be used as a coolant for heavy water nuclear reactors. Iran is building a heavy water facility and one of the diplomats said Iran was likely looking for the substance "to get the reactor going."

Another diplomat familiar with Iran's nuclear activities also suggested Iran's interest

was linked to its research reactor. Deuterium can only be used to boost nuclear explosions if combined with tritium, and there was no evidence Iran was trying to acquire that substance, he said.

The reactor itself is one of several projects that have increased suspicions about Tehran's nuclear aims.

Heavy water can be used to make plutonium. Iran says it needs the plutonium from the research reactor for isotopes in medical research but plutonium-like enriched uranium—can also be used to make nuclear warheads.

For the past year, the IAEA has been carrying out stringent inspections of Iranian facilities, uncovering evidence that strengthened suspicions about Tehran's nuclear ambitions. In June, the IAEA's Board of Governors rebuked Tehran in a sharply phrased resolution indicating it felt too many unanswered questions remained.

British, French and German officials will meet with Iranian representatives in the next few days to try to gain a renewed commitment that Tehran will not enrich uranium—an unlikely prospect, considering the recent developments.

Most of the IAEA's concerns about the Islamic Republic's nuclear program focus on traces of highly enriched uranium found at several sites and the extent and nature of work on the advanced P-2 centrifuge.

Iran has grudgingly acknowledged working with the P-2 but said its activities were purely experimental. It says the minute amounts of enriched uranium were from equipment bought on the nuclear black market.

IAEA chief Mohamed ElBaradei has indirectly questioned such assertions.

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Militants claim to kill Pakistan hostages

By **OMAR SINAN**
AP WRITER

BAGHDAD, Iraq (AP)—A militant group holding two Pakistani contractors hostage said Wednesday it had killed the men but freed their Iraqi driver, the Al-Jazeera television station Al-Jazeera reported.

The group, calling itself the Islamic Army in Iraq, had announced in a video Monday that it kidnapped two Pakistanis working for U.S. forces and sentenced them to death because their country was discussing sending troops to Iraq.

In a new videotape sent to Al-Jazeera on Wednesday, the men said they had carried out their threat, the station reported. The newsreader said the video showed the corpses of the two men; however, the station declined to show the footage.

The kidnapped men were identified by Pakistan as engineer Raja Azad, 49, and driver Sajad Naeem, 29, both of whom worked for the Kuwait-based

al-Tamimi group in Baghdad. The militants also warned the company to stop doing business in Iraq or they would kill more of its employees.

"This is a brutal murder slaying. It has nothing to do with politics," Masood Khan, a spokesman for Pakistan's Foreign Ministry, told CNN. "They have taken innocent lives. Here in Pakistan, everybody will be mourning tomorrow."

The group said it had released the Iraqi driver, Omar Khaled Selman, after it was clear he had been duped by the Pakistanis. The militants released a video Wednesday showing Selman describing his ordeal.

"After interrogation, they charged us all with the death penalty, and then they postponed mine and carried out the death penalty for the two Pakistanis because it was clear that they were spies," he said.

"After further interrogation with me, they found out that I was only a driver and they released me," he said on the vid-

eo broadcast on Al-Jazeera.

Militants have kidnapped more than 70 foreigners here in recent months in an effort to push countries out of the coalition, deter others from joining and disrupt reconstruction efforts.

The three men disappeared Friday after a convoy of trucks they were traveling in was attacked.

Pakistan's president and prime minister had appealed for the hostages' release, saying they were just poor men trying to support their families. The men's families also pleaded for their release in the name of Islam.

Pakistan, an Islamic nation of 150 million people and a member of the U.N. Security Council, has been a key ally of the United States in its war on terror in Afghanistan, but the country's leadership has been less supportive of the U.S. role in Iraq.

In June, Iraqi insurgents kidnapped and threatened to behead another Pakistani, Amjad Hafeez, but he was later freed.

Iraq suicide car bomb kills 68, wounds 56

By HADI AWAD
AP WRITER

BAQOUBA, Iraq (AP)—A suicide car bomb tore through a downtown street Wednesday, killing 68 Iraqis and turning a bustling area of shops and fruit stalls into charred corpses, twisted metal and burning cars—the deadliest attack in the month since U.S. authorities handed sovereignty to an interim government.

The late morning explosion wounded 56 Iraqis, overwhelming the hospital in Baqouba, a city 35 miles northeast of the capital. Every bed was filled, forcing many victims to sit on the floor amid pools of blood as frantic health workers treated them. One wounded man sitting against the wall held his head in his hands and wept. People ran through the corridors searching for information on missing relatives.

“These were all innocent Iraqis, there were no Americans. What was their guilt?” one man shouted at the bomb site, pounding his head in grief. Other men screamed epithets and denounced the attackers as terrorists.

The blast, one of the deadliest single-bomb attacks since Saddam Hussein’s fall more than a year ago, came just three days before the country is to convene a national conference that will choose an interim assembly—considered a crucial step toward establishing democracy.

The explosion capped a violent day across Iraq, with U.S. and other coalition forces fighting a series of gunbattles with insurgents.

In one clash with militants thought to have crossed over from Iran, 35 insurgents and seven Iraqi police were killed near the south-central Iraqi city of Suwariyah. Polish Lt. Col. Artur Domanski, a multinational force spokesman, said he had no information on whether the insurgents were foreign fighters or Iraqi militants. Iran says it does not allow fighters to cross its borders but it does not rule out that such people may cross illegally.

Also Wednesday, the military said clashes throughout Anbar province killed two coalition troops, and two U.S. soldiers were killed in separate roadside bombing attacks. Their deaths raised the toll of U.S. military personnel killed in Iraq to at least 906 since the war began, according to an Associated Press tally.

Al-Jazeera television reported that an Iraqi militant group holding two Pakistani contractors had killed the men. The group, calling itself the Islamic Army in Iraq, said it kidnapped the Pakistanis because they were working for U.S. forces.

The large number of civilian casualties in attacks has angered many and even raised questions on Islamic Web sites, where the morality of killing Muslims who



An Iraqis vents his anger as he points at a damaged vehicle at the scene where a rocket landed and exploded in the middle of a side street of the Al Rahmaniyah neighbourhood in West Baghdad, Iraq on Wednesday, July 28, 2004.

Iraqis angry over repeated bombings

BAGHDAD, Iraq (AP)—They have been bombed, shot, kidnapped and bombed again. They don’t know who’s an enemy and who’s a friend. After 15 months of unrelenting violence that has killed civilians and terrorized much of the country, Iraqis are furious.

There are signs the bloodshed could be creating a backlash against the militants waging the attacks in Iraq’s name, but many here also blame the presence of U.S. forces for the turmoil in the country, and others believe the U.S. government is actually behind the attacks.

“I wish someone would tell me who is responsible for these acts. Believe me, I would drink his blood,” said Firas Salah Mahmood, a 24-year-old civil engineer.

Like Iraqis across the country, Mahmood watched in horror Wednesday televised scenes from Baqouba, where a suicide bombing killed 68 Iraqis.

After the attack, Iraqis swarmed the street, wild with anger and grief. They cursed the attackers and called them terrorists.

“These were all innocent Iraqis. There were no Americans. What was their guilt?” shouted an angry man, pounding his hands against his head.

Many of the attacks target coalition forces or Iraqi authorities, who have become more visible since the United States transferred sovereignty to an interim government last month.

But most of the victims are Iraqi civilians.

Iraqis are finding it hard to point the finger at themselves, fiercely clinging to the notion that foreigners, or the U.S. military, are behind devastating bombings that have killed hundreds in the last 15 months.

“What honorable Iraqi would kill another Iraqi?” asked Inaam Mahdi, who lives near a police station in Baghdad where a bomb killed nine people July 19.

Rumors accompany virtually every bombing. Some people insist they saw U.S. aircraft fire rockets that left huge craters and overwhelming destruction. Others assert U.S. soldiers place explosives in car trunks when they stop Iraqis at

checkpoints, then detonate the bombs by remote control.

Even Iraqi officials are loath to acknowledge the vast majority of insurgents are their countrymen, as U.S. intelligence officials have recently confirmed.

“It is clear that terror groups targeting Iraq are imported from abroad,” Berham Salah, the deputy prime minister for national security, said Wednesday.

Most Iraqis say that if U.S. troops leave, the attacks would end. They claim the United States is instigating attacks to justify its presence.

It’s a point that religious factions are keen to capitalize on. They condemn kidnappings and explosions while calling for a U.S. withdrawal.

Mohammed Bashar al-Fai-dhi of the Association of Muslim Scholars, an Iraqi Sunni Muslim group with close ties to insurgents, walked this line when condemning hostage-taking recently.

“If a hostage is unrelated to occupation forces, their abductors should free them. If they are to respect Islamic religious principles,” he said, tacitly en-

dorsing the kidnapping of coalition forces and their allies.

The bombing in Baqouba, 35 miles northeast of Baghdad, was the deadliest attack since the handover of sovereignty. Mahmood said his first reaction upon seeing the attack—which targeted applicants for the police force—was to cry.

“I felt really angry after I saw all those innocents falling. Why us?” he said. “Those people went looking for jobs there because they had no choice.”

A similar scene hit the Seidi-yeh neighborhood in southwest Baghdad just over a week ago, when a fuel tanker truck plowed toward a police station and blew up.

Mahdi, who lives nearby, has had enough. She’s had to replace the windows in her home three times because of bombs: U.S. forces blasted the Baath Party headquarters during the war and two car bombs since then shattered her windows, burst water pipes and turned her living room floor into a sea of uneven tiles.

“We don’t care who is behind the attacks. We just want them to end,” she said.

as the new government takes a more prominent role.

Secretary of State Colin Powell condemned the Baqouba attack during a visit to Cairo, meeting with President Hosni Mubarak on the first stop of a Mideast tour.

“It was once again an attempt by murderers to deny the Iraqi people their dream of a peaceful

country that rests on a solid foundation of freedom,” Powell told reporters. “We have to condemn it, we have to fight it. We must not let these kinds of tragic incidents deter us from our goal.”

After leaving Egypt, Powell went to Saudi Arabia, where he held talks with top Saudi officials on the possible formation of a Muslim force to be deployed in Iraq as a supplement to the U.S.-led coalition, U.S. officials said.

The attack in Baqouba targeted a police station, and many of the dead and wounded were among the hundreds of Iraqis gathered outside hoping to join the force, police said. The blast also ripped through a passing bus, killing 21.

Barham Saleh, deputy prime minister for national security, blamed foreign fighters and Saddam loyalists for the 10:13 a.m. bombing in Baqouba, once a center of support for Saddam that is now a hotbed for the insurgency. Saleh called the attack “a cowardly act carried out by the treacherous pawns of terrorism.”

The street in central Baqouba was soaked with blood and strewn with corpses. Scorched bodies—some with their clothes blown off—lay in the middle of the road, up against nearby buildings and under burned, crushed vehicles. A white metal security gate outside a shop was stained red.

The morgue—its floor red with blood and blackened where charred corpses had been dragged—overflowed with bodies stacked on top of each other in the refrigerator. The bodies that did not fit were lined up on the ground outside, some covered with blankets, one with only palm fronds.

One man collapsed in grief as he found his son’s lifeless body. “It’s Hatem, it’s Hatem,” he wailed.

Witnesses said the bomb targeted men waiting outside the al-Najda police station trying to sign up for the force.

“As one of the officers was giving us instructions on how to register we heard a big explosion,” said Sabah Nouri, 33, whose left leg and hand were injured. “Suddenly I found myself being thrown to the ground, and I was unable to move. Then some people lifted me and took me to the hospital.”

U.S. military officials said the bomb was in a van or a white truck. Interior Ministry spokesman Col. Adnan AbdelRahman said it was in a Daewoo sedan.

The blast killed 68 people and wounded 56, according to Saad al-Amili, a Health Ministry official. The Iraqi government declared the victims martyrs, entitling their families to pension benefits, Saleh said. It was believed to be the first time the new government had promised such benefits to victims of an attack.

work for U.S. coalition forces in Iraq has been debated.

In an audio recording posted Wednesday on one site, a speaker purported to be the spiritual adviser of an Iraqi insurgency group justified killing fellow Muslims when they protect infidels and also the deaths of bystanders in an attack.

“If infidels take Muslims as

protectors and Muslims do not fight them, it is allowed to kill the Muslims,” said the speaker, identified as Sheik Abu Anas al-Shami, spiritual leader of Tawhid and Jihad, a group led by al-Qaida-linked Jordanian militant Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

The speaker also said that if Muslims who “mingled” among infidels were killed in an attack,

that would be justified because killing infidels is paramount. The tape was recorded before the June 28 handover of power.

Iraqi officials have warned that attacks would get worse as the country works to rebuild and edges toward democracy. U.S. forces have been trying to lower their profile and put Iraqi security forces in the front lines

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Life & Style

Video gaming industry discovers girls

By JOSE ANTONIO VARGAS
THE WASHINGTON POST

Choices: a machine gun, a handgun, a shotgun, a grenade. What's a 14-year-old girl to do?

"You use them at different times," says Aikaterini "Kat" Stamoulis, a high school sophomore in suburban Washington, her eyes focused on the video-game screen. She's playing Time Crisis 3, a point, shoot and duck spree that allows her to keep changing weapons.

Martin Tran, standing to Kat's left one afternoon at a local mall, looks surprised. "Girls don't like video games," he says. "They just don't."

Tran's perception fits the popular notion of the video and computer gaming industry as testosterone territory: 61 percent of players are male, the characters in the games are almost all male, and the marketing (as embodied by PSM, "the world's No. 1 PlayStation Magazine," with "10 pages of your favorite game girls") is pretty much boys-only. Just where girls and women fit into the world's fastest-growing entertainment industry—\$7 billion in game sales last year—is still an open question. Kat, for one, thinks it's a missed opportunity.

"Some girls like cars," she says. "Some girls like shooting games. They should gear their games toward boys and girls. Wouldn't they get more money that way?"

Schelle Olhava, a senior analyst with International Data Corp., a research firm in Mountain View, Calif., agrees. "For long-term growth, the industry needs to figure out how to get to the female demographic. But look at it this way: Who are making the games? Men. They design what they want to play. Whenever

you see a TV show or read articles about the games, who are being shown? Men. Though we have data that says: Yes, women are playing games, and they're playing all kinds of games."

Nearly two-thirds of females using games are 18 or older, according to the Washington-based Entertainment Software Association. That includes computer gaming and video gaming in which players use consoles such as Xboxes or PlayStations connected to their TVs.

Women make up 39 percent of all video and computer gamers, and industry analysts say most are computer gamers "on the run"—say, women on their lunch breaks, looking for something fun and quick to do.

Association President Douglas Lowenstein says strategy games—card and puzzle games at Web sites such as Zone.com and Realarcade.com—are attracting women in droves. But "the percentage of women and girls in the 'passionate' gaming category is significantly less than the percentage of boys and men," he says. "I think the industry is really not doing a great deal right now, from a marketing and creative standpoint, to accelerate the adoption of games by girls and women. ... It's shortsighted."

Henry Jenkins, head of the comparative media studies program at MIT, tackled the gender gap in "From Barbie to Mortal Kombat: Gender and Computer Games," a book he co-edited in 1998. "They call it a GameBoy, right?" he says. "That's a clear sign, a huge assumption, that the players will be boys."

Jenkins and others note the exception of a few games aimed at pre-adolescent girls (think of the Mary-Kate & Ashley and Barbie games) that appeared on the market starting in 1994. The "girl game genre," as industry insiders call it, has

barely made a dent in the market, and success has meant overcoming considerable skepticism.

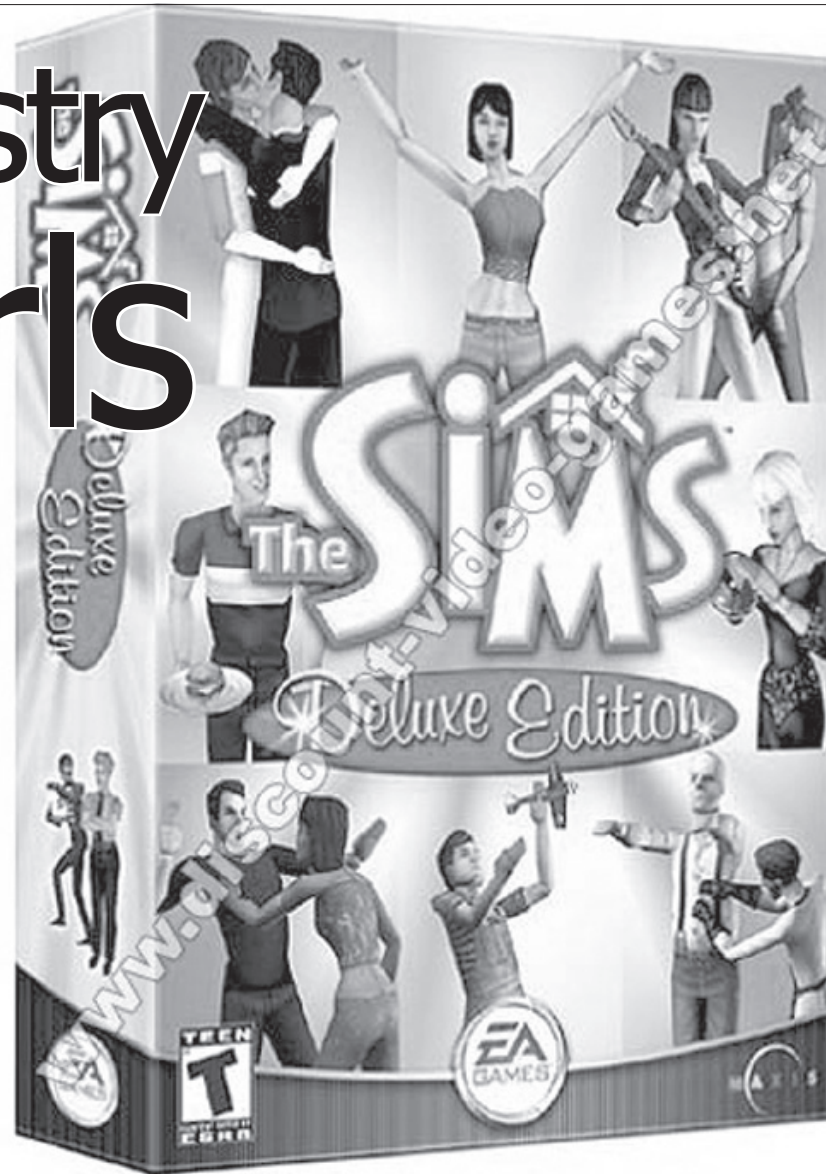
In 1998, for example, Megan Gaiser's company, Her Interactive, created Secrets Can Kill, a computer game based on a popular Nancy Drew book. "No publisher—now, I'm not going to name any names—but no publisher would put that game on the shelf," says Gaiser. "They said, 'Females are computer-phobic, they don't play computer games, there's no market for them.'"

Gaiser had the last laugh. She promoted the games on her Web site, Herinteractive.com, and sold them on Amazon.com. The games were a hit. Since 2000, the Nancy Drew franchise has sold 1.8 million units.

Still, most games "are really well-designed to take the traditional aspects of boy-playing," says Jenkins. "As games have emerged in the past decade or so, a lot of what has been created was taken from what boys like to play in the back yard. But where does that leave the girls?"

The Sims seems to have found it. The PC game—the best-selling PC franchise of all time, selling some 12 million copies of various titles—is now translated into 17 languages. It's like reality TV gone virtual, with gamers playing God, dictating what a neighborhood of simulated people (Sims) can do. There's the Sims Livin' Large, the Sims House Party, the Sims Hot Date and so on. Trudy Muller, a spokeswoman for Electronic Arts (EA)—which publishes the Sims and reported a 2003 revenue of \$2.96 billion—says at least 50 percent of the games' players are women.

"With the Sims, you're really building relationships and, with the focus



The Sims—for simulated people—is now the best-selling PC franchise of all time, selling some 12 million copies of various titles. At least 50 percent of the Sims' players are women.

groups that we've done, that's something that interests women and teenage girls," she says.

What sells are "games that span both genders and all ages," Muller notes. Her logic: Yes, sports games are made for sports fans, most of whom are men, "but the women are there, and they, too, are playing the sporting games." She predicts that as video games "become more mainstream, you'll have a wider range of content."

"Here's the bottom line: All the games that succeed are obsessed with being great entertainment product," echoes J.C. Herz, author of "Joystick Nation: How Videogames Ate Our Quarters, Won Our Hearts, and Rewired Our Minds," considered the definitive look at the culture

of video games. "Talk of 'girl games' is 'nonsense,'" she says, covered in "political correctness."

So just what do women want? "Asking what women want to play is like asking what kind of movies women want to watch. It's very divergent. That's what the industry is so slow to realize," says Phaedra Boinodiris, who in 1999 started Womengamers.com, one of the few women's gaming portals on the Internet.

"It comes down to choices," she says. "Women would like better female characters and more of them, and more gender-neutral games where, as a player, you don't have to play a man. It's simple, really. Women want marketing that acknowledges that women gamers do exist."

Evolving research of female teen sexuality

By LAURA SESSIONS STEPP
THE WASHINGTON POST

WASHINGTON—Outside of conservative religious circles, the common understanding for years has been that homosexuality is largely genetic, based on physical attraction, and unchanging. Though an easy model to understand, if not accept, it has a major flaw: It is derived almost exclusively from male subjects.

Recent studies of relationships among women suggest that female homosexuality may be grounded more in social interaction, may present itself as an emotional attraction in addition to or in place of a physical one, and may change over time. Young women also appear to be more open to homosexual relationships than young men are. In one recent national study, more than twice as many girls as boys reported being attracted to the same sex at least once.



Girls may be reacting, in part, to relationships gone sour with guys.

Chloe Root, a sophomore at Brown University, has been surprised by the number of gay women she knows who say this. "They say that when you're with a guy, there is often a feeling that you're

always going to be in a narrow feminine role," she says. "They say that guys treat them as less capable, overly emotional, or too hungry to be attached."

Girls hanging out at Washington's Union Station one recent night are more blunt about it.

"Girls understand how girls think," says Chanda Harris, a junior at a Beltsville, Md., high school. "You can tell a girl, 'I think I'm falling in love with you' and she'll listen. A boy will slough that off, or run away. Besides, the young boys around me are into making money, selling weed and stuff. That's not what I'm about."

A Bladensburg, Md., High senior, Kateria Rhodes, who says she has dated girls for five years, overhears Harris. "It's not the sex," she says. "Girls are there for you emotionally. Sure, they cheat sometimes, but I've found (dating girls) is better for me mentally. Actually it's better on every level."

She says she has friends who used to date girls and now date guys, and that her mother keeps telling her she'll change, too.

Harris doesn't feel that parental pressure: "My mother prefers me to be with girls than guys. She says I'm happier."

Lisa Diamond, assistant professor of psychology at the University of Utah, is one of a handful of researchers altering the way some people think about girls such as Harris and Root.

"Starting in graduate school, every study I found sampled males only," she recalls. In 1994, Diamond launched a longitudinal study of women ages 16 to 23 who said they were attracted to other women.

In the eight years she has been following these women, almost two-thirds of them have changed labels. "They've gone from unlabeled to bisexual, lesbian to bisexual, lesbian

to 'heterosexual and getting married but may be attracted to women in the future,'" she says. Another word she heard was "heteroflexible."

"The reason one person ended up gay might be very different from another person," she continues. "One might know at 4, another at 30."

Diamond's research, reported in the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, among other publications, confirms the experience of Diane Elze, who has counseled gay and lesbian youth for two decades.

"Women who come out as lesbians but lived most of their lives as heterosexuals—does that mean they were always lesbian? I don't think so," says Elze, assistant professor of social work at Washington University in St. Louis. "Probably we're going to find out there are multiple pathways to homosexuality and that could vary by gender."

This summer camp really rocks

By Ellen Barry
LOS ANGELES TIMES

A small hand appeared at the door, followed by a small boy, his black T-shirt falling almost to his knees. He looked around at the other children, and asked, in the bell-clear voice that precedes puberty: "Is this the punk class?"

It was. The teacher, the 20-year-old guitarist for a band called Genghis Tron, was introducing a roomful of students to the throbbing power chords that form the backbone of punk and heavy metal.

A few doors away, a professional voice coach was helping 14-year-old Cory Blanchette re-

"Ten or 20 years ago, you wouldn't have been able to do this," said Carlisi. "Now I have parents coming up to me and saying, 'I just want to thank you for what you've done for my child. You've changed them.'"

Carlisi, 51, can well remember the age of the guitar hero, when Duane Allman and Eric Clapton were worshiped as gods. Through the 1970s and into the 1980s, Carlisi and his bandmates in 38 Special wore their hair long and their shirts half-buttoned. Like Lynyrd Skynyrd, a band they often played with, their solos were so intense that, as one ardent reviewer wrote in 1984, "Double-Barreled Howitzer might be a more accurate moniker

in Little League. The first time they were asked to stand on stage, said one instructor, some trembled.

That day, the counselors sat together and, in a single, intense hour, grouped them into bands. The rest of the week proceeded like a particularly loud psychology experiment.

"These kids, they want to rip, they want to shred," Carlisi said. "They're hungry for all of it."

Lesson 1. Make it a little more dirty.

Josh Bell, 11, stood in front of vocal coach Felicia Sorensen, singing, in the sweet tenor he had cultivated in a church choir, "Smells Like Teen Spirit," Kurt Cobain's grunge anthem.

"A mulatto," he sang. "An albino/ A mosquito/ My libido."

Sorensen, who has sung backup for Usher and Amy Grant, watched critically from across the room. When she works with young vocalists, she trains them to "bring up emotion" from their lives. She and Josh were working on anger.

"Remember," she told him, "You're a rock star."

The students at Camp Jam pose a considerable rock 'n' roll dilemma in that many of them are, frankly, adorable.

By Wednesday, 13-year-old Jennifer Wright and her band had practiced "Should I Stay or Should I Go," so often that it began to sound polished.

It was all wrong. Instructor Alan Yates, a singer-songwriter in a black T-shirt and silver hoop earrings, took them aside. "Make it more rocking. A little more dirty, and not so pretty," he told the band. "It's not a pretty song."

They disappeared into a practice room, where they figured out something important: If they learned the song well enough, they could start "messing around and making weird noises," as Jennifer put it. The next time the band got on stage, the sound was ragged and a little distorted. Yates approved.

Their inhibitions fell away. Jennifer, 13, played so hard she broke guitar strings.

Lesson 2. Have creative differences.

Here, as in all great rock ventures, egos collide. Drummers deliver ultimatums. Artists complain to their parents. On the second day, a camper came up to Carlisi and said, "I think my mom called yesterday. She said she wants me to be in another band."

"I said, 'Does your mom want you to be in a band because you're better than your bandmates?'"

"He said, 'Uh-huh.'"

Carlisi sat the boy down with Liberty DeVitto, Billy Joel's longtime drummer, who was on hand to teach a class: As the best musician in a band, DeVitto explained, you pull the rest of the band up to your level. The boy walked away, thinking hard, and did not repeat his request.

There's nothing more important to teach campers than the combustible emotional environment of a band, said Carlisi, who likens these relationships to a "very difficult marriage of five or six people." He split from 38 Special in 1996, at a time when conflicts simmering for two decades began to seem unsurmountable.

"In the beginning, it's all for one and one for all, you're not making a dime," he said. "The money gets into it, and greed gets into it, and it really ruins everything."

Lesson 3. Act cool on stage.

It was the 11th hour, and Cory was still hanging back. In rehearsals of "Should I Stay or Should I Go," he sang with the physical enthusiasm of a man waiting for a bus.

Performance anxiety is particularly acute for lead singers, who stand before the audience with nothing but personality and a microphone stand to protect them, said Lee Adkins, the camp's staff director. Adkins, a bass player who toured for years with an Atlanta band called Soup, offered a tutorial in lead-singer antics.

In a practice room, he jumped onto a chair in a simulation of musical ecstasy, pretending to play a guitar solo. A student copied the move. When jumping onto the drum set in a moment of musical ecstasy, it's essential to jump with both feet, Adkins explained.

"It's a passion thing, but you can't just do it, because something bad will happen," he said. "You will fall down."

Others consulted with Maryn Vance, a rock musician and choreographer who advises Atlanta hip-hop artists on posture, microphone technique and eye contact.

"Get into it, so we know this is about you," she said. "If you're going to be introverted and be this deep, dark soul over the bass guitar—then get into that."

Lesson 4. Smile for Mom and Dad.

At 6 p.m. on Friday, the parents filed into the auditorium to see their children perform. The parents had their own reasons for sending their kids to rock 'n' roll camp. Julie Iarossi, 43, gave a dreamy smile when she recalled her 10th-grade boyfriend, who played the drums.

John Kennedy described his 13-year-old son, Drake, as "an extremely fine conversationalist," but worried about his tendency to shyness.

Many were remembering their own adolescence, when parents stood at a distance from the turmoil of youth culture.

Back then, high school musicians bagged groceries to save for their guitars and congregated in garages, where they played songs that sounded bad. Their parents reminded them of this.

It would be different for the campers. With their parents surrounding them, they were stepping onto a sound set worth \$20,000: 8,000-watt amplifiers and a sound system that a touring band could use. A professional sound engineer was on hand for mixing.

As Cory Blanchette finished singing "Should I Stay or Should I Go," his mother, Gail, felt her eyes well up with tears. Kennedy beamed as his son Drake bounced back and forth over his guitar, long hair flying.

"I was just so proud," Kennedy said. "There was a transformation. A total transformation."

As for Josh Bell, it was clear that he had managed to dredge up anger from somewhere. He sang "Smells Like Teen Spirit"—"I feel stupid, and contagious/ Here we are now, entertain us"—with such an aggressive roar that the crowd came to life, hooting and clapping...

Before the performance, he had warned her she might be shocked by what she would see in him that night.

"He said, 'Don't worry, Mom, I've learned a new song,'" Mary said. "And he asked, 'What's a libido?'"



Camp Jam founder Jeff Carlisi, lead guitarist and songwriter of the platinum selling rock band 38-Special, center, shares the musical talent with two campers.

hearse a song he had never heard: "Should I Stay or Should I Go," which was recorded by The Clash eight years before he was born.

And in every direction, along the halls of a Jewish day school outside Atlanta, children of the suburbs were being instructed in speed-metal, death-metal, ripping, shredding, maniacally insane guitar solos, and jumping onto the bass drum for dramatic effect without hurting yourself.

It is a sign of the times that parents in the Atlanta area lined up this summer to send their children to Camp Jam, a \$495 week-long day camp under the direction of Jeff Carlisi, guitarist for the arena rock band 38 Special, which had major hits in "Hold on Loosely" and "Rockin' Into the Night."

In his weaker moments, Carlisi wondered if his concept (the camp's motto is "No Canoes—Lots of Rock") would find the right audience in a culture that has moved away from high-voltage rock 'n' roll.

But the 9-to-17-year-old campers who showed up here recently wore their hair over their eyes and spoke with reverence of Jimmy Page. Their taste for hard rock had been nurtured by baby boomers—parents able to see heavy metal and punk as a wholesome, enriching after-school activity.

for this six-man musical assault team."

Throughout the 1990s—a period of baleful melodies and grunge chic, a time marked by Kurt Cobain's ascension and suicide and by those who could not replace him—Carlisi watched and waited. His band was playing motorcycle rallies and county fairs; young people, eyes shining in recognition, approached him and said, "My mom loved your band."

A hypothesis was forming. If the band's fans had become parents then maybe they would encourage their teenagers to learn hard rock.

Carlisi and his business partner, Dan Lipson, rented space and tested their theory this summer in the heart of Atlanta's wealthy northern suburbs. Applicants were required to have six months' experience playing or singing "in a semi-structured environment," but they were not expected to have played in a band.

On the first day of camp—one of four weeklong sessions that will continue through July—Carlisi waited outside while station wagons and minivans dropped off 70 campers. They came with instruments in cases, their T-shirts declaring allegiance to the East Village underground club CBGB and the bands that played there.

The truth was, many of these campers looked like they would be more comfortable

Study links kids' obesity to watching TV

By **SUE LEEMAN**
AP WRITER

LONDON (AP)—Children who watch more than two hours of television a night seem to be at higher risk of becoming smokers or being fat, out of shape or having high cholesterol as adults, according to a new study.

Watching TV in childhood and adolescence has long been linked to adverse health indicators, including obesity, poor fitness and high cholesterol, but the study published Friday in *The Lancet* was the first to track a group from birth to adulthood.

Dr. David Ludwig, director of the obesity program at Children's Hospital in Boston, and Steven Gortmaker, a sociology

lecturer at the Harvard School of Public Health, said the data indicate television viewing in childhood has "serious long-term consequences" and strengthen "the case for a ban on food advertisements aimed at children." Neither was connected with the study.

The researchers from the Dunedin Multidisciplinary Health and Development Research Unit assessed some 1,000 people born in Dunedin, New Zealand, in 1972-73, at regular intervals until age 26. They investigated associations between childhood TV viewing and body-mass index, or BMI, cardio-respiratory fitness, cholesterol level, smoking status and blood pressure.

They found that even an average weeknight viewing of one to two hours between the ages of 5 and 15 was associated with higher body-mass indices, lower cardio-respiratory fitness, increased smoking and raised cholesterol.

This was the case even after they adjusted for such factors as family economics, the smoking habits and weight of the parents, and the children's size at age 5.

The study found that among 26-year-olds, 17 percent of overweight, 15 percent of raised cholesterol, 17 percent of smoking and 15 percent of poor fitness could be attributed to watching television for more than two hours a day during childhood and adolescence.

The researchers noted that, as in any observational study, they couldn't prove TV viewing caused health problems.

"Television viewing might be a marker for some unidentified determinant of adult health, and individuals who have a natural tendency to obesity and poor physical fitness might prefer to watch television than do other activities," they wrote.

The researchers said several childhood behaviors - including physical activity and diet - could explain the association between TV viewing and health.

For example, watching television could affect fitness and obesity by taking the place of more active pursuits, they said, adding that TV advertising in

New Zealand also tends to promote an unhealthy diet.

The researchers said watching TV might also influence other behaviors, such as cigarette smoking, which "we found to be significantly associated with television viewing."

Although TV advertising of tobacco was banned in New Zealand before study members were born, programs have continued to show frequent images of smoking during children's viewing time, they said. Tobacco sponsorship for sports events continued until 1995.

The report said it could not define a safe level of TV viewing because it couldn't find enough people who watched no television to serve as a

control group, but those who watched an hour or less a day were the healthiest.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that parents limit their child's viewing to two hours a day.

"Clearly, obesity is a complex condition, with numerous genetic, environmental and psychosocial contributing factors. However, (this) should not be an excuse for inaction," Ludwig and Gortmaker wrote in a separate commentary in *The Lancet*.

"Measures to limit television viewing in childhood and ban food advertisements aimed at children are warranted, before another generation is programmed to become obese."

Douglas testifies on Zeta-Jones threats

By **MASON STOCKSTILL**
AP WRITER

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Michael Douglas testified Wednesday he felt shocked, frightened and vulnerable after learning that his wife, Catherine Zeta-Jones, had received death threats, and she was so terrified that she had fainting spells and difficulty breathing.

The actor took the stand at the preliminary hearing in a stalking case against Dawnette Knight, 32.

"She just felt that she was a marked person," Douglas said of his wife. "She was having a difficult time maintaining emotional control."

Knight was arrested June 3 at her Beverly Hills apartment and charged with one felony count of stalking and 24 felony counts of making criminal threats. She

was held on \$1 million bail.

Knight, in handcuffs, sat quietly throughout the proceeding, which will determine whether there is enough evidence to order her to trial.

Douglas, the 59-year-old Academy Award-winning star of "Wall Street," appeared under stress and cleared his throat frequently during his testimony. Zeta-Jones, the 34-year-old Oscar-winning co-star of "Chicago," was expected to testify later in the day.

The actor testified that the first threat that he learned of was a telephone call made in March to a hotel his family owns in Bermuda. He said he did not mention the call to his wife, fearing it would "upset her tremendously."

After discussing the call with authorities, Douglas said, he learned that his father had already received threatening letters directed at Zeta-Jones.



Douglas

"I've never received mail like this before," he said. "They're very graphic in nature."

Douglas said he eventually told his wife about the threats and the two discussed whether they knew anyone who could possibly be behind them. At the request of investigators, Zeta-Jones also looked at the letters to see if she recognized the handwriting.

Zeta-Jones then went to Amsterdam to film scenes for the upcoming movie "Ocean's Twelve," according to Douglas, who said he spoke with the producer to be sure extra

security would be in place.

While there, the hotel where Zeta-Jones was staying received phone calls threatening her, he testified.

That awareness of where Zeta-Jones was, coupled with a letter that described the interior of a home where the couple once lived, showed that whoever was making the threats had access to a lot of information about them, Douglas said.

"The proximity made us terrified," he said. "There was a knowledge in these letters that was deeply unsettling."

Zeta-Jones eventually sought treatment from a doctor and began taking medication to calm herself, Douglas said.

After her arrest, Knight wrote a letter of apology to Zeta-Jones, describing herself as "a confused young woman infatuated with Michael Douglas."

Eating disorder may humanize Mary-Kate

LOS ANGELES (AP)—There are two Mary-Kates in crisis. One is the fragile 18-year-old who was released this week from treatment for an eating disorder. The other is Mary-Kate the product, half of the multimedia Olsen twins empire that has been shaken by her personal troubles.

As Ashley Olsen shoulders the burden of doing international publicity for their twins-in-the-city comedy "New York Minute" all by herself, Mary-Kate is trying to return to a healthy weight and restore her spirits by hanging out with friends and family in Los Angeles, their publicist said.

But what does this mean for their billion-dollar business?

It may ultimately help Mary-Kate's image by humanizing it.

Instead of rejecting their fallen teen idol, many of Mary-Kate's young fans have embraced her vulnerability, forging an even deeper bond with the star they know from direct-to-video movies, her clothing line and merchandise including



AP

Actress Mary-Kate Olsen, 18, who is recovering from treatment for an eating-disorder, signs autographs at the premiere of her film "New York Minute," in this May 1, 2004, file photo, in Los Angeles.

toothpaste and dolls.

Apart from jokesters who mock her ailment, many of Mary-Kate and Ashley's young fan base have defended her from cruel barbs, organizing mass "Get Well" card signings and counseling each other over the sadness and worry they feel for the actress.

"Since I heard about (the eating disorder) my enjoyment of their movies did change a little. I'm always thinking, 'How did she get herself like that when she was perfectly normal and fine before?'" Monica, a 15-year-old fan from Canada, told *The Associated Press*. (Her mother declined to allow her last name to be used.)

Now, Monica said, Mary-Kate's problems make her more relatable. "It feels like celebrities never get sick and are always perfect but this makes us realize Mary-Kate and Ashley are like us too."

The twins are grateful for their fans understanding, said Michael Pagnotta, their long-time publicist.

wallace

Girl's refusal to sleep alone leaves mom all by herself

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN

DEAR ABBY: My husband, "Rick," and I have a 4-year-old daughter, "Carmelle." When I brought Carmelle home from the hospital, she slept in a crib in our bedroom and I'd bring her to bed with me for midnight breast feedings so I could sleep.

Since then, Carmelle has refused to sleep in her own bed. I placed a child bed next to ours in our bedroom, and each night I'd tuck her in. But she would cry, so Rick would let her climb into ours. For the past year, she has slept between us. The situation is now bordering on the ridiculous. I often wonder why I bothered to have my tubes tied.

Carmelle has a room of her own that I recently furnished, but she refuses to use it. I now sleep alone in our king-sized bed. That's because I told Rick I didn't want her wetting in my bed any longer. I thought a brand-new bedroom set with a twin-sized bed would encourage Carmelle to sleep in her room and Rick to sleep with me. Well, it backfired, and I continue to sleep alone, while my husband sleeps with our daughter in her bed. Have you any advice for me?

ABANDONED IN PALM BAY, FLA.



Dear Abby

DEAR ABANDONED: Take your daughter to her pediatrician for an examination to determine why she's still wetting the bed. There are medications and devices that can help her—but first you must determine what's causing the problem.

Once that's done, it's time for you and your husband to have a heart-to-heart about why he's sleeping with his daughter instead of his wife. If necessary, have it in a marriage counselor's office. In some cultures, a "family bed" is a tradition (in our culture it is much less so), but even then, the husband and wife find time to be alone with each other. For the sake of your marriage, you must resolve this important issue, so don't put it off any longer.

P.S. Some sessions with a child psychologist might also be helpful. Your little girl isn't going to like it when her routine is disrupted, so be prepared.

DEAR ABBY: My friend "Sheila" is going through a rough divorce. She called one night and told me she was going to kill herself. When I tried to calm her and talk her out of it, she hung up on me. I tried calling her back for about 10 minutes. Then, fearing she had injured herself, I called the police.

When they went to Sheila's home and couldn't find her, they called me, and I suggested some other places she might be. They managed to locate her and took her to the hospital. She was released, and now she's mad at me. Sheila says I overreacted—she wasn't really going to do it—and that it's my fault she got bruised from the encounter. (It was storming and muddy, and they fell in the mud.)

I asked her for forgiveness. She said she wants nothing more to do with me. I love Sheila like family. I did what I was always taught to do in a situation like that. Did I do something wrong?

NEEDS TO KNOW IN INDIANA

DEAR NEEDS TO KNOW: No, you did exactly the right thing. You did not owe Sheila an apology; she owes you one. By now, you must have realized that your friend is self-centered, overly dramatic and brought this episode upon herself. Divorces can make people hyperemotional and irrational. Once Sheila gets her feet back on the ground, I hope she realizes what a good friend you are. If she doesn't, the loss is hers.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

What teens need to know about sex, drugs, AIDS, and getting along with peers and parents is in "What Every Teen Should Know." To order, send a business-size, self-addressed envelope, plus check or money order for \$5 (U.S. funds only) to: Dear Abby, Teen Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Postage is included.)



Michael Jackson speaks at a news conference after his arraignment on child molestation charges at the Santa Maria, Calif., courthouse, in this April 30, 2004, file photo.

Jackson surprises shoppers in Houston

HOUSTON (AP)—Michael Jackson signed autographs for surprised shoppers as he bought toys and stuffed animals at a Houston mall.

Jackson was in Houston "on business, and just decided to drop by the mall," spokeswoman Raymone K. Bain told The Associated Press Wednesday.

Some who spotted Jack-

son Tuesday night asked for autographs. The 45-year-old pop star shook hands with those who approached and sampled a pretzel at one shop, Houston TV station KTRK reported.

KTRK said Jackson was in Houston to meet with a lawyer about a music contract issue.

After his shopping spree,

mainly for toys and teddy bears, he left town.

Jackson is charged in Santa Maria, Calif., with committing a lewd act upon a child, administering an intoxicating agent and conspiring to commit child abduction, false imprisonment and extortion. He is free on \$3 million bail and has pleaded not guilty.

Hoffman helps allergic bee-sting victim

MALIBU, Calif. (AP)—Although he once played the reluctant "Hero" in a movie of the same name, Dustin Hoffman wasted no time rushing to the aid of an allergic bee sting victim.

The Oscar-winning actor's real-life heroics occurred two weeks ago when a woman walking on the beach with friends was stung by a bee near Hoffman's home in Malibu.

Lydia Graham began having

an allergic reaction and a friend rushed to get help from the beach patrol and people nearby.

"I could feel my eyes starting to sting and swell and my lips starting to swell up as well," Graham said Tuesday on CBS' "The Early Show."

Hoffman and his wife, Lisa, were on deck chairs outside their home when they heard what happened. Hoffman's wife, who is also allergic to bee stings, retrieved an emer-

gency injection kit from their home and the two rushed to the woozy Graham's aid.

After she began to recover, they invited her to their deck to rest.

Graham, 36, said that as her throat was closing up, she recognized a familiar face on the sand with her.

"I did recognize that it was Dustin Hoffman but I was sure that ... I could possibly die," Graham said.

Perjury trial for rapper Lil' Kim delayed

NEW YORK (AP)—A federal judge Wednesday postponed the trial of rapper Lil' Kim on charges she lied to a grand jury to give her lawyers more time to review the prosecution's evidence.

Prosecutors objected to the delay from November to Feb. 28. The rapper, whose real name is Kimberly Jones, is charged with conspiracy, perjury and obstruction.

Prosecutors have accused

Jones of lying to a grand jury investigating a 2001 shooting allegedly involving members of her entourage. One man from a rival rap group was injured.

Jones' former manager and co-defendant, Damion Butler, has been indicted for allegedly shooting a weapon during the incident. Jones is accused of telling the grand jury that Butler was not present.

Butler, escorted into the courtroom in handcuffs by

federal marshals Wednesday, is serving a prison term on unrelated weapons charges.

Also Wednesday, Jones restated her not guilty plea to address updated charges against some of her co-defendants.

Lil' Kim won a Grammy Award for her part in the hit remake of "Lady Marmalade" in 2001. She was to perform last month on the Caribbean island of St. Kitts, but the judge would not let her go.

'Kangaroo Jack' actor charged with rape

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP)—Anthony Anderson, the rotund comedic co-star of "Kangaroo Jack" and the original "Barbershop," has been arrested and charged with aggravated rape while shooting a movie.

The 33-year-old actor was accused by an unidentified woman of luring her into a trailer on the set of his latest movie, "Hustle & Flow," and sexually assaulting her with the film's assistant director, Wayne Witherspoon.

Both men were charged on Wednesday after being taken into custody by the Shelby County Sheriff's Department.

The incident occurred Tuesday afternoon at the Shelby County Correctional Center, a penal farm on the outskirts of Memphis, where filming was under way for the movie.

Sheriff's spokesman Steve Shular said a passer-by heard screams coming from the trailer and opened the door.

"And she ran out nude," Shular said.

Both suspects were released Wednesday evening after posting \$20,000 bond each.

Anderson's spokesman, Allan Mayer, who specializes in celebrity crisis cases, told The Associated Press his client "absolutely denies the heinous charges."

"Anthony is a happily married family man who has never been accused of—no less involved in—anything remotely like this, and we are confident that when all the facts come out, he will be completely exonerated," Mayer said.

Mayer said it's unclear whether Anderson will return to work on the movie, but said he will likely remain in the Memphis area for the time being.

A representative for Witherspoon, 42, could not immediately be located.

Anderson, who's married with two children, was raised in Compton, Calif., and has appeared in an array of comedies, including playing one of Jim Carrey's illegitimate genius sons in 2000's "Me, Myself & Irene."

The roly-poly actor specializes in physical comedy—often at his own expense. He has been brutalized by Jet Li in "Romeo Must Die," pummeled by Steven Seagal in "Exit Wounds," crushed by a cash machine in "Barbershop" and menaced by a rogue marsupial in "Kangaroo Jack." He also starred in the WB's short-lived sitcom "All About the Andersons" last year, which was a fictionalized version of his real life.

Pastimes

Kupchak: Re-signing Bryant not sure thing

By CHRIS SHERIDAN
AP BASKETBALL WRITER



Never again will Shaquille O'Neal wear gold and purple. And if that wasn't stunning enough, consider the idea of Kobe Bryant clad in red. "We have no idea whether Kobe will come back," Lakers general manager Mitch Kupchak acknowledged Wednesday after completing the trade that sent O'Neal to Miami. "We're hopeful that he'll re-sign, but we don't even know that."

Wasn't it just recently that the Lakers were being called—rightly or wrongly—a dynasty? A better term these days might be train wreck.

Another chapter in the disassembly of that so-called dynasty was completed Wednesday, the NBA office giving final approval to the deal sending O'Neal to Miami for Lamar Odom, Caron Butler, Brian Grant and a future No. 1 draft pick.

"The Eastern Conference, outside of Jermaine O'Neal, it's not going to be that difficult to me. So I look forward to it," Shaq said.

The plot line and the date of the next chapter of "As the Lakers Unfurl" will become known soon, though no one—except perhaps the publicly silent Bryant—is certain exactly when.

By trading Melvin Ely and Eddie House to Charlotte for two second-round draft picks, the Clippers have cleared enough salary cap space to offer Bryant a maximum-salary contract of about \$100 million over six years.

The Lakers can offer Bryant a seventh season in a package worth an additional \$30 million, but whatever contract Bryant

signs will presumably have an opt-out clause after the fifth season—making the financial value of the two offers much more comparable.

"My guess at this hour is we've done everything we can do," said Kupchak, who reiterated what he said earlier this summer—that the Lakers will not consider any sign-and-trade deals for Bryant.

"I'm hopeful that he'll make a decision sooner rather than later," Kupchak said. "I don't know if it will be tomorrow. I don't know if it will be Friday. I don't know if it will be next week. If he chooses to take time, he'll take time."

Elsewhere around the league, Rasheed Wallace continued to negotiate with the NBA champion Detroit Pistons, and Erick Dampier was stalling on accepting lucrative offers from Atlanta and Denver in the hope that the New York Knicks would be able to acquire him from Golden State.

One factor working in the Knicks' favor was their willingness to take on Evan Eschmeyer's bloated contract, and there were several multi-team trade possibilities being discussed, an NBA source told The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

A number of previously agreed upon free agent deals were signed Wednesday, the first day in two weeks that trades could be made and free agents could sign with new teams.

The only signings not previously reported were minor ones—center Jason Collier joining the Atlanta Hawks, and forward Tamar Slay and guard Jason Hart joining the Bobcats.

The Denver Nuggets and New Jersey Nets continued to discuss trade scenarios involving forward Kenyon Martin, while Vlade



Los Angeles Lakers' Shaquille O'Neal drives to the basket between Miami Heat's Lamar Odom, left and Brian Grant during the first half at the Staples Center in Los Angeles, in this Nov. 16, 2003 photo.

Divac pondered returning to one of his former teams, the Lakers, rather than taking less money from his current team, the Sacramento Kings.

Also, incoming Raptors general manager Rob Babcock reiterated his desire not to trade Vince Carter, but he was vague when asked if Carter's agent, Mark Steinberg, had requested a trade.

"My preference is to have Vince here, but that's up to Vince more than it is up to us," Babcock said.

But by far the biggest news of the day was the blockbuster sending O'Neal to South Florida. It is one of the few times in league history that a dominant center near the peak of his career has been dealt.

"We feel that we have traded for the best player in the NBA," Heat president Pat Riley said, adding that ticket sales for the upcoming season have been brisk. "Over at the business office of the American Airlines Arena, it's like being on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange right now. It's absolutely a frenzy."

Bryant judge bars medical exam evidence

By COLLEEN SLEVIN
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

DENVER (AP)—The judge in the Kobe Bryant sexual assault case on Wednesday barred evidence from a medical exam performed on the NBA star, saying investigators didn't have the proper court order to take him to the hospital in the middle of the night.

District Judge Terry Ruckriegle also rejected prosecutors' claims that Bryant had consented to the exam, saying investigators had officially taken him into custody by then.

The judge did deny a defense request to throw out a 75-minute interview of Bryant by detectives and evidence including a T-shirt stained with the alleged victim's blood. Bryant's attorneys said the material was gathered while he was illegally in custody, but the judge disagreed.

Ruckriegle said Bryant will-

ingly talked to the detectives and gave them some of his clothing.

"There was no evidence of any coercion or undue influence put upon Mr. Bryant to either speak to them or to provide the items from his room," Ruckriegle said.

"We're pleased with the ruling and we consider it an important ruling," prosecution spokeswoman Krista Flannigan said. She did not specifically comment on losing the evidence from the medical exam.

After-hours calls left with Bryant's Denver-based defense team were not immediately returned.

Bryant, 25, has pleaded not guilty to felony sexual assault and faces an Aug. 27 trial. He has said he had consensual sex with a front desk worker, now 20, at the Vail-area resort where she worked last summer.

If convicted, Bryant faces four years to life in prison or 20

years to life on probation, and a fine of up to \$750,000.

Bryant's attorneys have long criticized the Eagle County sheriff's office, saying investigators improperly questioned Bryant and botched the execution of a court order to gather evidence last July.

Prosecutors had argued in favor of submitting the medical exam and the rest of the evidence, saying that it was collected with Bryant's consent the night after the alleged attack.

During a hearing in February, lead investigator Doug Winters acknowledged that Bryant's hospital examination violated Colorado court rules.

Winters and his partner had obtained a type of warrant for "non-testimonial evidence," which usually involves taking samples of hair and fibers. It must be executed during daylight hours to prevent the government from unnecessarily

invading the privacy of citizens. With the departure of three starters, Riley will build his team around O'Neal, Olympian Dwyane Wade and Eddie Jones, Miami's leading scorer each of the last four seasons.

The Heat will now shop for help at both forward positions and backup point guard, and free agents will likely consider Miami a more appealing option with the addition of O'Neal.

"Everybody wants to be here now," said Jones, who played with O'Neal in Los Angeles from 1996 to 1998.

Whether Bryant wants to remain with the Lakers remained the league's biggest mystery.

Kupchak and new Lakers coach Rudy Tomjanovich met with Bryant on Monday night, as did Clippers officials.

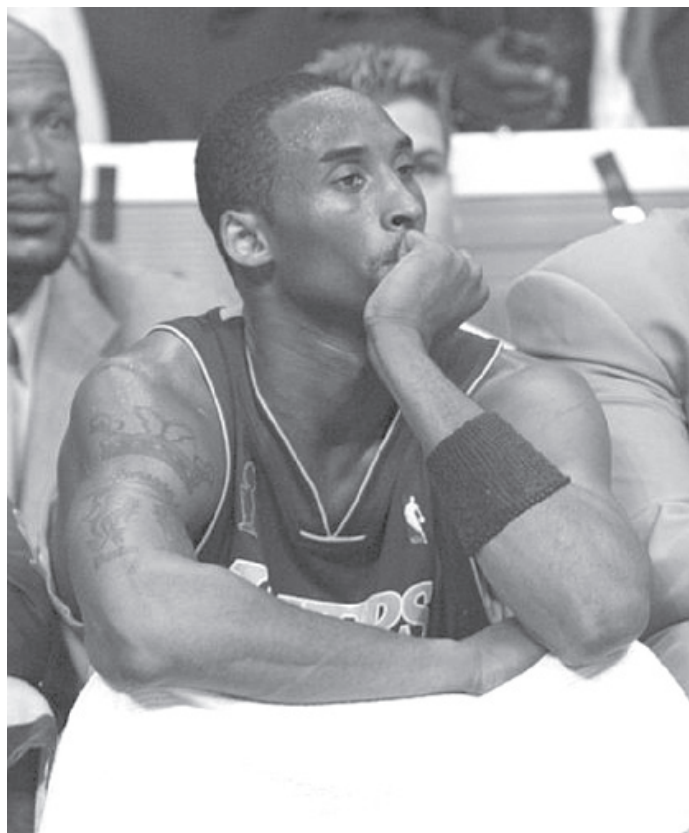
"The meeting went well. I don't have a better feel what he may or may not do," Kupchak said. "Do we have a replacement player in place? No, we don't. You can't replace a Kobe Bryant."

Bryant, who turns 26 next month, joined the Lakers in 1996—the same year O'Neal was signed as a free agent. He goes on trial later this summer in Colorado for felony sexual assault, and a conviction in the courtroom would render moot any decision he makes about where to spend the next five-plus years.

The pair feuded at times, but as one of the top 1-2 punches in NBA history they led the Lakers to three championships (2000-2002) and a berth in the finals this year, where they lost to the Detroit Pistons in five games.

Now, one superstar is gone and the other may be out the door soon.

"Kobe's a free agent," Kupchak said. "There exists the possibility we'll get nothing (if he leaves)."



Los Angeles Lakers guard Kobe Bryant watches the closing minutes from the bench in Game 5 of the NBA Finals at the Palace of Auburn Hills, Mich., Tuesday, June 15, 2004.

Virenque wins 10th Tour de France stage



Richard Virenque of France is cheered by spectators as he climbs the Col du Puy Marie mountain pass to win the 10th stage of the Tour de France cycling race between Limoges and Saint-Flour, central France, Wednesday, July 14, 2004.

By **JOHN LEICESTER**
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

**SAINT-
FLOUR,
France**
(AP)—Seven

seconds. That may not seem like much, but in the Tour de France, the advantage Lance Armstrong gained over two rivals Wednesday could be an important step in the Texan's bid for a record sixth straight crown.

At a minimum, Armstrong struck a psychological blow by showing his 32-year-old legs still have enough zip after the Tour's longest stage to outshine Tyler Hamilton and Roberto Heras—former teammates raring to dethrone him. But Armstrong's main rival, Jan Ullrich, was able to keep up.

The German, a Tour winner in 1997 and five-time runner-up, stayed with Armstrong in a sprint to the finish of the first mountain stage. They ended up with the same time.

The glory on Bastille Day went to Frenchman Richard Virenque, who took his seventh stage victory of a spotted career with a strong solo ride, and French champion Thomas Voeckler, who retained the overall lead.

Armstrong still trails Voeckler by 9 minutes and 35 seconds. The 25-year-old Frenchman displayed his resilience by riding

toward the front of main pack for much of the 147-mile trek from Limoges and by outsprinting Armstrong at the finish.

Voeckler placed fifth, Armstrong sixth and Ullrich 15th—the last in a group of 14 riders who finished together 5 minutes and 19 seconds behind Virenque's mark of 6 hours and 24 seconds. Other Armstrong rivals Ivan Basso and Iban Mayo also finished in that bunch.

Armstrong's burst of speed on the uphill finish was to ensure that riders with him didn't open up a gap and gain time. In doing so, he left Hamilton and Heras trailing in a second group of 36 riders who finished seven seconds back.

If the Tour is close, that time may prove precious. The 101-year-old race's narrowest winning margin remains American Greg Lemond's defeat of Frenchman Laurent Fignon in 1989. Last year, Armstrong beat Ullrich by just 61 seconds.

"Remember Fignon? He lost by eight seconds. It can be important," said Johan Bruyneel, sports director of Armstrong's U.S. Postal Service team.

Overall, Armstrong extended his advantage over Hamilton to 43 seconds and over Heras to 1 minute, 52 seconds. Ullrich remained 55 seconds behind Armstrong.

Hamilton's team manager

Urs Freuler said the 33-year-old from Marblehead, Mass., was poorly positioned in the final stretch, "which is why a few seconds were lost."

In a preview of their expected duels to come in the harder Pyrenees and Alps, Armstrong and Ullrich led the main pack up the hardest of nine climbs Wednesday—a 3.5-mile ascent of Le Puy Mary, in the Massif Central region of central France.

While the climb and the stage were the hardest so far, Bruyneel said it was too early to tell whether the Texan is stronger than his challengers.

Armstrong "looked good and sounded good on the radio," Bruyneel said. "It was a hard climb ... but still very far from the finish of the race, so we can't really know now who is good and bad."

Armstrong was one of five riders called for a doping test after the stage and did not talk to reporters.

Virenque's escape took the darling of French cycling fans a step closer to his goal: to become the first seven-time winner of the polka dot jersey as best climber.

Despite his involvement in a 1998 doping scandal, Moroccan-born Virenque is admired for his climbing panache and was cheered on by hundreds of thousands of people lining the route.

He became the 14th Frenchman since World War II to win on Bastille Day and the first since Laurent Jalabert in 2001.

A teary Virenque dedicated his win to a friend who died two days earlier and his grandmother who died in June. He said their memory drove him on.

"It's fabulous, I was at the end of my strength," he said. "I had cramps everywhere."

Virenque and Axel Merckx, the son of five-time Tour champion Eddy Merckx, surged ahead of the main pack at the 22-mile mark and built a lead of more than 10 minutes.

But Virenque overtook the Belgian rider on the 5,897-foot-high Le Puy Mary. In all, he rode for 125 miles ahead of the pack and alone over the last 40 miles to the finish in Saint-Flour. He thrust his arms into the air at the line, pointing to the sky. Merckx, drained, placed 71st, 6 minutes and 18 seconds behind.

At 34, Virenque is approaching the end of a career that could see him hailed as the Tour's best-ever climber. He currently is tied with Spanish rider Federico Bahamontes and Belgian Lucien Van Impe with six mountain titles.

But Virenque also was a member of the Festina squad ejected from the 1998 Tour after customs officers found banned drugs in a team car.

Astros fire Williams after three seasons



HOUSTON (AP)—The Houston Astros made it clear they're making one final push for the post-season, firing manager Jimmy Williams Wednesday and bringing in Phil Garner.

A season that began with World Series aspirations for the Astros has been slipping away, so general manager Gerry Hunsicker wanted an immediate and "dramatic" change.

"There's a cloud that hung over our team for so long," he said. "Time is of the essence. We can't waste too much time here."

Garner, a former Astros player, is taking over on an interim basis. The team will conduct another search at the end of the season.

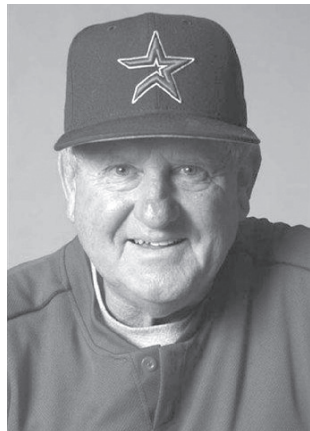
"I'm excited. I'm a Houston boy and I'm looking forward to it," Garner, a former manager with Detroit and Milwaukee, told The Associated Press in a phone interview. "We got some boys on the team that I think can do something really special. This is an opportunity that I've been waiting for."

Williams' job security had been the subject of speculation for about a month, right about the time Houston's surprising slide down the NL Central standings began. He was fired during a clubhouse meeting with Hunsicker, owner Drayton McLane and other team officials.

"He indicated that he was not surprised," McLane said. "He knew something wasn't clicking."

The season began with expectations of the club's first World Series appearance in its 42-year history after the offseason acquisition of former New York Yankees teammates Andy Pettitte and Roger Clemens.

But Houston was 44-44 heading into the All-Star break, a remarkable disappointment for a team that was tops in the NL Central for the first month and a half of the season.



The Houston Astros fired manager Jimmy Williams, shown in this 2004 season photo, and replaced him with Phil Garner on Wednesday July 14, 2004, a last-ditch effort to rescue a season that started with World Series expectations.

LONG BEACH, Calif.

(AP)—Jenny Thompson won the 50-meter freestyle at the U.S. Olympic swimming trials on Wednesday, giving her a second individual event at the Athens Games. She also qualified in the 100 butterfly.

The 31-year-old Thompson was slowest off the block but caught the field during a furious dash to the opposite wall. She won in 25.02 seconds, while Kara Lynn Joyce finished second (25.11) to also claim a second individual spot on the Olympic team.

Thompson will be just the second American swimmer to take part in four Olympics. She has won 10 medals—more than any other woman—but but her eight golds have all been in relays.

Individually, Thompson has been limited to a silver and a bronze, both in the 100 free. She failed to qualify for that event at these trials—Joyce was the upset winner—and conceded that her medal chances in the 50 weren't that strong.

Thompson's winning time was only the eighth-fastest in the world this year.

"Although my 100 free was not what I wanted it to be, I know I can be a lot faster in Athens," she said.

Thompson considered retirement after the 2000 Sydney Games, but decided to come back for one more Olympics.



Jenny Thompson looks back after her win in the Women's 50-meter freestyle final at the U.S. Olympic swim trials in Long Beach, Calif., Wednesday, July 14, 2004. Thompson won with a time of 25.02.

She had to cope with the death of her mother, who succumbed to cancer in February after being a major force in Thompson's swimming career.

Through it all, she insists that she didn't come back to win an Olympic gold.

"It's not what is motivating me," she said. "I just want to end my career on a really positive note."

Thompson said she would be honored to be the swimming team captain, a role that already has spurred lobbying by three-time Olympian Gary Hall Jr.

Larsen Jensen closed a record-breaking meet in appropriate fashion: setting a new American mark in the 1,500 freestyle. He became just the third U.S. man to go under 15 minutes at 14:56.71, overcoming the mark

of 14:56.81 that earned Chris Thompson a bronze medal at the 2000 Olympics.

The 18-year-old Jensen is a rising star of distance swimming, though he'll have his work cut out for him in Athens. The Australians, led by Grant Hackett, have long ruled the longest event in swimming.

"I'm looking forward to racing Grant Hackett in Athens," said Jensen, who already had qualified to swim the 400 free in Athens. "I wasn't sure I was going to be able to finish it. I was hurting so bad."

Erik Vendt claimed the second spot in the 1,500 at 15:11.96. Chris Thompson got into the final because another swimmer scratched but finished far back in seventh at 15:44.57. He

didn't have time to prepare after fracturing both elbows during a May training mishap.

Natalie Coughlin, swimming in the 50 after qualifying in two other events, finished sixth at 25.31. She was swimming the sprint just for fun, figuring it might help her preparations for the 100 freestyle.

"I'm very happy," Coughlin said. "I had three best times in 1 1/2 days and I learned a lot of good things for my 100 free."

Six world records were set during the meet, boding well for American hopes of another big medal haul in Athens. Four years ago, the U.S. team led all nations with 14 golds and 33 medals overall.

Earlier Wednesday, Michael Phelps announced that he would give up one of his individual spots on the Olympic team, the 200 backstroke. He qualified in five other events and, combined with the relays, hopes to equal or break Mark Spitz's record of seven gold medals.

Phelps' decision put Bryce Hunt on the Olympic team. He finished third at the trials behind Aaron Peirsol, who broke his own world record, and Phelps.

"I'm pretty excited," said Hunt, who made his first Olympic team. "People were telling me that he might drop out of the 200 backstroke, but I didn't think it was going to happen. I just hope I can bring back a medal."

Woods aims to regain form at British Open

By **TIM DAHLBERG**
AP SPORTS COLUMNIST

TROON, Scotland (AP)—Tiger Woods has been hitting fairways this week, and his caddie, Steve Williams, hasn't been hitting anyone.

The British Open doesn't start until Thursday, of course, and things can change just as quickly as the quirky weather off the coast of west Scotland. Woods doesn't need to be reminded of that.

The last time the British Open was held in Scotland, he was not only an overwhelming favorite, but British bookies also fancied him to finish off the Grand Slam that year.

Incredibly, just two years later, he's not even the pick to win this week at Royal Troon. That honor would go to Ernie Els, who just a short time ago seemed baffled by the idea he could actually beat Woods when it really mattered.

Now, it seems, anyone—and that really means anyone—can beat Woods. Eight players have won major championships since he took the U.S. Open at Bethpage, N.Y., in 2002.

With each wayward drive, Woods sinks a little bit more toward mediocrity. The mystique is gone, and so is the intimidation other players used to feel every time he stuck a tee in the ground.

"Pure and simple, he can't drive the ball in the fairway," Nick Price said. "From all I've seen now the last five months, his off-the-tee game is so erratic, and there's no pattern to it because he's losing it right and left. Until such time as he starts getting the ball in the fairway, he's going to struggle.

"You have to be a great driver of the ball to win major championships."

Indeed you do, and Woods once was. Which, of course, brings us to the question of what Woods has been doing to become that great driver again.

Well, he's got a new driver for one, a big fat graphite shafted Nike that's just the type he once



Tiger Woods is seen during practice for the British Open at Royal Troon golf course in Troon, Scotland Wednesday July 14, 2004. The British Open is scheduled to start on Thursday July 15.

AP

scorned. He's longer than ever, but length has never been a problem for Woods.

Presumably he's been out practicing with it, though you might wonder where he's getting the time. He's got a fiancée and an increasing number of business interests and recreational pursuits away from golf.

Some of those are in Las Vegas, where Butch Harmon, his former swing guru, teaches. Woods' visits, though, have nothing to do with getting instruction from his estranged coach.

Last month he jetted there for a few days of gambling after finishing well off the pace at the U.S. Open. And just hours after he finished his final round at the Western Open near Chicago, he was spotted partying at a posh casino nightclub.

Coincidence? Maybe. Woods, like anyone else, has the right to blow off steam. He's certainly earned it after bearing the many responsibilities that came with being Tiger Woods over the last few years.

But Woods became great because of his singular focus on his golf game, as his father, Earl Woods, would be more than willing

to tell you. He became great by constant hours of practicing to come up with a short game as great as the shots he could seemingly manufacture at will off the tee.

Whether the same focus is still there is hard to figure out. Woods doesn't let anyone inside his private life, and he's not about to tell anyone what he's doing.

But if last month's U.S. Open is any indication, there are cracks in the armor. At Shinnecock Hills, Woods feuded publicly with Harmon even while his drives were going sideways, and he wasn't a factor on the weekend.

At the same time, his caddie became so annoyed at a photographer that he kicked his camera, then later went into the crowd and grabbed another one from an astonished spectator.

The boss doesn't like distractions, you know.

"I've always played my best when I've gone out and played—and stayed—focused on what I have to do and not worry about anything else," Woods said Tuesday.

Woods didn't say much else. He's become more taciturn than ever, insisting as always that everything is fine, while at the

same time refusing to be drawn into any specifics about his game or his swing.

Harmon speculated at the U.S. Open that his former student was in a "bit of denial" about everything, a statement that angered Woods mostly because it was made publicly.

Since then, Woods and Harmon have chatted and Woods said they patched up some of their differences. None of that chat concerned his golf swing, though, and Woods still stubbornly clings to the notion he can fix things himself.

Maybe he can. Maybe Woods knows something no one else knows and will find a way to do something he hasn't done since last October—win a stroke-play tournament.

Winning, of course, is the best way to quiet critics. If Woods can win his second British Open, people will quickly quit talking about his slump and return to talking about his chances of beating Jack Nicklaus' record of 18 major championship titles.

And maybe his caddie will get a clue and quit bullying people on his way around the course.

TRIBUNE SPORTS SCORES

SPORTS TRANSACTIONS

MLB

HOUSTON ASTROS-Fired Jimmy Williams, manager; Burt Hooton, pitching coach; and Harry Spilman, hitting coach. Named Phil Garner manager, Jim Hickey pitching coach, and Gary Gaetti hitting coach.

NBA

ATLANTA HAWKS-Signed C Jason Collier.
BOSTON CELTICS-Re-signed C Mark Blount to a six-year contract.
CHARLOTTE BOBCATS-Signed G Jason Hart and F Tamar Slay.
DALLAS MAVERICKS-Re-signed G Marquis Daniels to a five-year contract with a team option.
DETROIT PISTONS-Signed F Antonio McDyess to a four-year contract with a team option and G-F Carlos Delfino to a three-year contract with a team option.
GOLDEN STATE WARRIORS-Re-signed C Adonal Foyle to a six-year contract.
LOS ANGELES CLIPPERS-Traded F-C Melvin Ely and G Eddie House to Charlotte for 2005 and 2006 second-round draft picks.
LOS ANGELES LAKERS-Traded C Shaquille O'Neal to Miami for F Lamar Odom, F Caron Butler, F-C Brian Grant and a future first-round draft pick.
MEMPHIS GRIZZLIES-Signed F Brian Cardinal to a six-year contract.
MILWAUKEE BUCKS-Signed C Etan Thomas to a six-year offer sheet.
PHILADELPHIA 76ERS-Signed F Brian Skinner to a multiyear contract.
PHOENIX SUNS-Signed G Quentin Richardson to a six-year offer sheet. Signed G Steve Nash to a six-year contract.
SAN ANTONIO SPURS-Re-signed F Bruce Bowen. Signed G Beno Udrih.
TORONTO RAPTORS-Signed G Rafer Alston to a five-year contract.
UTAH JAZZ-Signed F Carlos Boozer and C Mehmet Okur to six-year offer sheets. Re-signed G Carlos Arroyo to a four-year contract.

NFL

GREEN BAY PACKERS-Voided the trade of DE Jamal Reynolds to Indianapolis after Reynolds failed his physical and waived him.
NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS-Released S Jason Perry.

PHILADELPHIA EAGLES-Signed G Adrien Clarke to a four-year contract and LB Jeremiah Trotter to a one-year contract.

Olympics

U.S. OLYMPIC MEN'S ROAD CYCLING TEAM-Announced Levi Leipheimer will replace Lance Armstrong.

College

AUBURN-Named Casey Dunn assistant baseball coach.
DARTMOUTH-Named Maribel Sanchez Souther women's cross country coach.
EVERGREEN STATE-Named Kim Farnsworth athletic trainer.
HOUSTON-Named John Severance women's tennis coach.
N.J. CITY-Named Bridgette Quimpo softball coach.
NORTH DAKOTA STATE-Named Eric Viney women's assistant volleyball coach.
NORTHWESTERN-Announced men's junior basketball F Bernard Cote will transfer from Kentucky.
OKLAHOMA-Named Bill Pink director of women's basketball operations.
PALM BEACH ATLANTIC-Announced the resignation of Chris Bizol, men's and women's tennis coach, to take a position with Texas-Tyler.
RHODE ISLAND-Announced the resignation of Boe Pearman, women's basketball coach.
SANTA CLARA-Named M. Felipe Montoro assistant cross country coach and Steve Drake women's assistant basketball coach.
SETON HALL-Named Gerson Echeverry men's assistant soccer coach.
SKIDMORE-Named Darren Bennett women's basketball coach.
ST. FRANCIS, PA.-Named Wylie Crisanti women's lacrosse coach.
TULSA-Named Christy Connoyer softball coach.
WRIGHT STATE-Named Rob Cooper baseball coach.

By The Associated Press

LOCAL SCORES

RESTAURANT LEAGUE STANDINGS

Angel Wings	3	0
Country House	3	1
Jollibee	3	1
Capricciosa	2	1
Keeraku	1	2
LSG Sky Chefs	0	3
El Segundo	0	4

Armstrong, UConn pair win ESPY Awards

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Tour de France champion Lance Armstrong was a repeat winner as male athlete of the year, and Connecticut basketball stars Diana Taurasi and Emeka Okafor were also honored Wednesday night at the 12th annual ESPY Awards.

Armstrong is currently attempting to win the Tour de France for the sixth straight time.

Taurasi won the best college female athlete for the second straight year as well as the best female athlete, while Okafor was chosen the best male college athlete. The two led their respective teams to NCAA championships last spring.

For the first time, fans determined the winners in all 36 categories, including the

19 cross-cutter honors that pit athletes from different sports against each other. More than 10 1/2 million votes were cast between June 21 and July 9.

Armstrong was honored as the best male athlete over home run king Barry Bonds, quarterbacks Tom Brady and Peyton Manning, and NBA star Kevin Garnett.

Taurasi was selected over golfer Annika Sorenstam and tennis star Justine Henin-Hardenne in the female athlete of the year category.

The Detroit Pistons, who beat the Los Angeles Lakers in last month's NBA Finals, were picked as the best team over the Super Bowl champion New England Patriots, World Series-winning Florida Marlins, Stanley

Cup champion Tampa Bay Lightning and the UConn men's and women's basketball teams.

Detroit's Larry Brown won the best coach/manager award, and the Pistons were the winners in the new best upset category.

Among other winners were Cleveland Cavaliers star LeBron James, best breakthrough athlete; Masters champion Phil Mickelson, best male golfer and top championship performance; Manning, best NFL player; Garnett, best NBA player; Lauren Jackson, best WNBA player; Antonio Tarver, best boxer; Stewart Elliott, best jockey; Andy Roddick, best male tennis player, Gail Devers, female track and field, and Serena Williams, best female tennis player.

Golfer Tiger Woods, a winner of a record 15 ESPY awards, didn't win one for the first time since 1999. Bonds and Sorenstam rank second all-time with six such awards. Bonds won as best baseball player and Sorenstam as best female golfer.

George Weah, best known for his achievements on the soccer field, received the Arthur Ashe Courage Award for his humanitarian efforts in his war ravaged homeland of Liberia and other African countries.

The Ashe award is traditionally given to an athlete whose contributions transcend sports.

The ceremony was held at the Kodak Theater and will be televised Sunday by ESPN at 9 p.m. (EDT).

Prosecutor asks to retry Jayson Williams

FLEMINGTON, N.J. (AP)—The prosecutor in the Jayson Williams manslaughter case wants to retry the former NBA star in Hunterdon County.

In papers filed with the trial judge on Wednesday, First Assistant Hunterdon County Prosecutor Steven Lember argued that the retrial should be moved to Hunterdon County, where limousine driver Costas Christofi was killed by a blast from a shotgun handled by Williams.

"Just as the perceived existence of pretrial publicity led the court to change venue to Somerset County, the even-more extensive trial publicity in Somerset County necessitates a return to Hunterdon County," Lember wrote.

Superior Court Judge Edward Coleman moved the first trial to Somerset County because of extensive pretrial publicity.

The 36-year-old Williams was acquitted in April of ag-

gravated manslaughter, aggravated assault and possession of a weapon for an unlawful purpose, but was convicted on four counts related to his efforts to cover up the shooting.

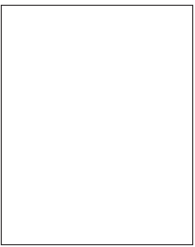
The jury deadlocked on the remaining reckless manslaughter count and a mistrial was declared. Lember decided to retry the case on that one charge.

The retrial is scheduled to start Jan. 10 in Somerville.

Christofi died in 2002 in Williams' Alexandria Township mansion.

If the judge denies Lember's request for a change of venue, the prosecutor has asked that a jury be brought in from a neighboring county with demographics similar to Hunterdon.

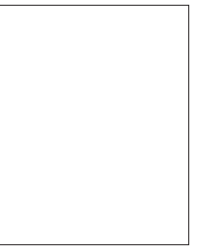
Lember will ask Coleman to reconsider his decision not to allow testimony about Williams' prior gun use, including the alleged shooting of his dog.



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